

CLIVE OF INDIA

W. P. Lipscomb and R. J. Minney

CLIVE OF INDIA

A Play
In Three Acts

LONDON
VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD
14 Henrietta Street Covent Garden
1934

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FOREWORD

CLIVE has suffered considerably at the hands of the historians. We have not attempted to "whitewash" him—there is no need. But neither need we accept blindly the verdict of the historians. With all his faults—and he was very blunt, rude, unscrupulous on occasion, and not without a touch of vulgarity in his love of ostentation—he still remains a great and very likeable person.

We will give just a few examples of the way historians, copying mistakes from one another have misrepresented Clive.

The Gift from Mir Jaffar.

With regard to the large gift of money Clive accepted from Mir Jaffar, the man he elevated to a throne, it should be borne in mind that the East India Company gave him, as they gave every member in their employ, full leave to make what money they could. This had been sanctioned and sanctified by custom for no less than a hundred and fifty years before Clive came to India. Every merchant in the Company had received gifts and made personal profit. Lord Chatham's grandfather, Thomas Pitt, had himself been an Eastern adventurer. He went so far as to defy the East India Company by becoming an interloper and cutting into their trading rights. He made such vast sums of money for himself that he brought back the famous diamond, since known as the Pitt

diamond, which he sold to the Duc d'Orleans, Regent of France, for over £100,000.

Clive was condemned, sixteen years after his acceptance of this gift had been approved by all, because he had the courage to put a stop to the plundering indulged in by employees of the East India Company. What he had received was a free gift for services rendered to his Company as well as to India ; but theirs was merely an orgy of grab—they snatched all they could seize. Clive was so angry when he heard of this that he left the ease and retirement of his country house and went back to India, at his own expense very largely, in order to purge the country. He did. But the men he drove out bought up seats in Parliament with their ill-gotten gains, and prepared a rod in pickle for his homecoming.

The "Suicide."

Again, it is inexplicable that without evidence our history books should continue to assert that Clive committed suicide. They state that he cut his throat. That is not true. He died of an overdose of opium, a drug he had been taking for some time in order to alleviate pain. Actually, on that day, he was setting out for Bath to take the waters. The coach was at the door of his magnificent house in Berkeley Square, and he was dressing when an acute attack of the pain made him seek once more the solace of the drug. He was heard to fall. Servants rushed into his room, and found him dead. The newspapers announcing his death, definitely stated that he "died of an overdose of opium unwittingly taken."

The Treacherous Omichand.

Clive has been censured for forging Admiral Watson's signature on a bogus treaty made to hoodwink that grasping Oriental scoundrel Omichand. No one has ever attempted to deny the cunning and treachery of Omichand. In the hour of crisis, Clive resorted to any means to outwit the fellow, in order to save the lives of thousands. Admiral Watson, when informed later of the forgery, raised not the slightest objection.

Macaulay was wrong in his portrait of Omichand, whom he describes as a Bengalee, whereas Omichand came from the Punjab, which lies a thousand miles from Bengal. Omichand (Macaulay also said), on discovering, after Plassey, that he was not to receive the guaranteed sum of money, lost his reason, and died within a month or two.

Actually, a year after Plassey, Omichand was still alive, and causing fresh anxiety to Clive and Warren Hastings. Scouts had to be despatched "to locate him, and apprehend him wherever they can meet him." It was an ironic gesture that, at his death, Omichand should have thought it meet to bequeath a part of his wealth to the London Foundling Hospital.

If for no other reason, we must remember Clive for one great thing. Up to this time, the Spanish, Dutch, French, Portuguese—indeed all the colonisers—had but one idea: to get rich quickly by any method possible, and we know to some extent how ruthless those methods were. Clive was the first man to advocate openly that if you come into a country as a conqueror you must give as well as take. His view was that

if we accept the responsibilities of India, we must give them colour by governing for the benefit, not only of ourselves, but of the people of that country.

Nobody listened. Even Chatham himself, though he agreed in principle, said it was only a dream. How much of it is still a dream, and how much has been realised already, we must leave you to decide.

In the play, we ask you to see the history of the times through the eyes of the two chief characters—Clive and Margaret. Their romance is historically true. It is the story of any man and any woman, wherein the man is for ever rushing off to conquer new worlds, and the woman is always tugging at his sleeve and reminding him of his promise to settle down quietly with her and her children.

CHARACTERS

(in order of their appearance)

MILLER JOHNSON STRINGER VINCENT	}	Clerks of the East India Company.
EDMUND MASKELYNE		
MR. KENT MR. PEMBERTON	}	Rich East India merchants.
ROBERT CLIVE		
THE GOVERNOR		
MR. WARBURTON MR. MANNING	}	Councillors of the East India Company.
SERGEANT CLARK		
MARGARET MASKELYNE		
AYAH		
LADY STANLEY		
LORD DALMAYNE		
ST. AUBYN		
LADY LINLEY		
MRS. NIXON		
SIR KYNASTON FRITH		A physician.
MRS. CLIFFORD		Housekeeper.
MR. WALSH		Clive's secretary.
MIR JAFFAR		Commander-in-Chief of Suraj ud Dowlah's Army.
OMICHAND		An Indian financier.
ADMIRAL WATSON		
MAJOR KILPATRICK		
CAPTAIN JOHNSTONE		
AN OLD INDIAN WOMAN		
MR. WEDDERBURN		
CAPTAIN GEORGE		
BETTY		A maid.
GEORGE		A farm bailiff.
A SURVEYOR		
SIR GEORGE HUNTER		
LORD CHATHAM		
BUTLER		
HOUSEKEEPER		
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT		

SCENES

ACT I

SCENE I: Verandah of a club in Fort St. David. 1748.

SCENE II: The council room, Fort St. David. Three years later.

SCENE III: Maskelyne's quarters. A few months later.

ACT II

SCENE I: Clive's house in Queen's Square, London. Three years later. 1755.

SCENE II: Clive's quarters in Calcutta. Two years later.

SCENE III: A Hut overlooking the river across Plassey. One month later.

ACT III

SCENE I: Clive's country house at Walcot. Seven years later. 1764.

SCENE II: A corridor in the House of Commons. Nine years later.

SCENE III: Clive's house in Queen's Square. The same night.

First produced in the West End at Wyndham's Theatre, on January 25th, 1934, with the following cast :

<i>Miller</i>	DOUGLAS BLANDFORD
<i>Johnson</i>	BASIL MOSS
<i>Stringer</i>	RAYMOND HUNTLEY
<i>Vincent</i>	ROY GRAHAM
<i>Edmund Maskelyne</i>	DEERING WELLS
<i>Mr. Kent</i>	VINCENT HOLMAN
<i>Mr. Pemberton</i>	GEORGE H. BISHOP
<i>Robert Clive</i>	LESLIE BANKS
<i>The Governor</i>	LOUIS GOODRICH
<i>Mr. Warburton</i>	DONOVAN MAULE
<i>Mr. Manning</i>	PAUL GILL
<i>Sergeant Clark</i>	HENRY CAINE
<i>Margaret Maskelyne</i>	GILLIAN LIND
<i>Ayah</i>	EVELYN MOORE
<i>Lady Stanley</i>	KATHLEEN BOUTALL
<i>Lord Dalmaine</i>	SHAPLAND COWPER
<i>St. Aubyn</i>	ROY GRAHAM
<i>Lady Linley</i>	WINIFRED EVANS
<i>Mrs. Nixon</i>	ROSAMOND GREENWOOD
<i>Sir Kynaston Frith</i>	T. RENAURD LOCKWOOD
<i>Mrs. Clifford</i>	BUENA BENT
<i>Mr. Walsh</i>	DOUGLAS BLANDFORD
<i>Mir Jaffar</i>	W. E. HOLLOWAY
<i>Omichand</i>	PHILIP LEAVER
<i>Admiral Watson</i>	FRANK PETLEY
<i>Major Kilpatrick</i>	RAYMOND HUNTLEY
<i>Captain Johnstone</i>	BASIL MOSS
<i>An old Indian Woman</i>	KATHLEEN BOUTALL
<i>Mr. Wedderburn</i>	LEO GENN
<i>Captain George</i>	SHAPLAND COWPER

<i>Betty</i>	JANE GRAHAME
<i>George</i>	JULIAN ANDREWS
<i>A Surveyor</i>	CARLTON BROUGH
<i>Sir George Hunter</i>	PAUL GILL
<i>Lord Chatham</i>	W. E. HOLLOWAY
<i>Butler</i>	T. RENAURD LOCKWOOD
<i>Housekeeper</i>	EVELYN MOORE

The play produced by CAMPBELL GULLAN

Clive of India was licensed by the Lord Chamberlain to the Village Players of Great Hucklow in the County of Derbyshire in March 1933. These amateur players gave the first performance of this play on any stage. The play has also been performed at the Theatre Royal, Windsor; and at Manchester, by the Manchester Repertory Company.

ACT I

SCENE I

The scene is the verandah of the club-room at Fort St. David, Southern India, 1748.

The verandah is slightly raised from the ground, and at the back of the stage are steps leading down to the pathway outside.

Several poor clerks are sitting about the verandah. Some are trying to play cards in spite of the heat, others are in a state of considerable dejection. They look shabby and worn.

A contrast comes when the senior merchants arrive outside with umbrella-bearers and bodyguard and walk through the outer club-room with great dignity. The moment a merchant comes in all the clerks stand to attention and run to help him, and wait for a word with him.

MILLER, one of the clerks, has just finished recounting the scene of a duel. JOHNSON is sitting back and looking at the others as if disbelieving. They are huddled together, whispering excitedly.

JOHNSON : Well, it seems incredible !

MILLER : I tell you I was there. I saw it all.

JOHNSON : Well, all I can say is that he is a lucky devil.

[STRINGER, a big surly fellow, comes up to the group. He is the bully, but is just as servile when the merchants come in.]

STRINGER : What's all this ?

JOHNSON : Miller's been telling us about young Clive's duel last night.

STRINGER : Oh ? Has somebody killed him ?

MILLER : No.

STRINGER : Pity. What was it about ?

MILLER : He called a man a cheat.

STRINGER : Did he ? Who was it ?

JOHNSON : Carpenter, of all people.

STRINGER : And Carpenter didn't kill him ?

MILLER : They arranged the duel in the room. Clive fired first and his bullet went wide—

STRINGER : And . . . ?

MILLER : Carpenter reserved his fire. He came right up to Clive, put the pistol to his head, and said, " Now am I a cheat ? "

JOHNSON (*joining in*) : And, according to Miller, the young idiot said, " I still say you cheated—shoot and be damned ! "

MILLER (*nodding*) : Yes, he did. It was terrible.

JOHNSON : And so the great bully thought a second, threw the pistol down, and went out, saying, " The man is mad. "

STRINGER : H'm ! Missed his chance. I would have pulled the trigger.

[VINCENT, *a small, weedy fellow with a precise and mincing manner, shakes his head.*

VINCENT : Oh, I wouldn't go as far as *that*.

STRINGER (*turning on him*) : Oh, you wouldn't ? Well, I would. Damn' moody, sullen young upstart.

JOHNSON : Thinks himself too good for his work out here.

MILLER : Do you know, he had the face to go to the Governor himself and tell him that the conditions of the clerks in the East India Company were all out of date.

STRINGER : Impertinence.

VINCENT (*precise*) : Well, I don't know ; in some ways I think he is right.

STRINGER (*snarling at him*) : Oh, you do ? Very interesting.

VINCENT : Well, how can anyone be expected to live on five pounds a year ?

STRINGER (*angrily*) : Well, anyway, is it for a young fellow like Clive to start questioning the

ditions? He has only been out here a year
—and a year too long at that.

A rich merchant, KENT, appears outside, with umbrella-bearer and bodyguard. You hear him say "Acha," with a nod to the bearer, who salaams and says, "Hozoor."

The hookah-wallah, watching from the corner of the andah, rushes to KENT with hookah. KENT waves at him, tries the hookah.

The clerks at once stop talking and rise deferentially. STRINGER seeks a look from the merchant, who looks at him, turns sharply to the others, who look away hastily.

KENT: That's better. Bring it into the club-room. Send in a punkah-wallah.

KENT walks through the room looking contemptuously at the clerks. They are awed and subdued by his presence.

KENT (continuing): Well, all these rules and privileges of merchants are so childish.

STRINGER: Now you are beginning.

KENT: Well, why should only the senior merchants be allowed to use a native umbrella-bearer?

They all get a little exasperated with VINCENT. STRINGER takes up the cards for a game.

STRINGER (to VINCENT): If you want to reform anything, you had better go and join up with the natives. He would like a friend, no doubt; he isn't any out here.

ELLER: Except Maskelyne, perhaps.

STRINGER: Oh—him!

WINSTON: S'sh!

MASKELYNE has come in; the others hush immediately. MASKELYNE says, "Good morning," but they deliberately ignore him and he goes to the corner and sits by himself. The clerks continue to whisper.

Used to be a good fellow until he made a friend of Clive.

STRINGER : Birds of a feather. (*Dealing the cards. He turns to VINCENT*) If you take my advice, you'll leave reforming the East India Company to those who like to be in hot water.

[VINCENT *withdraws and goes out. There is a commotion outside as MR. PEMBERTON, one of the richest and fattest merchants, arrives.*

He is a big, wheezy man, and at the moment he is choleric. He dismisses his bearers angrily and wheezes up the steps. He glares at the clerks, who shift uneasily and turn to their game. KENT and another merchant come from the inner room and see him.

KENT : Pemberton ! What's the matter ?

PEMBERTON (*roaring*) : Matter ? Matter, sir ? Pretty goings on ! Damn it, sir, these young writers, these clerks (*he throws the word at the clerks in the corner with a contemptuous gesture ; they at once shrink round the table*), begin to assume the privileges of merchants before they have drawn their first month's salary.

KENT (*calming him*) : Yes, yes, yes, but——

PEMBERTON : I have just made an example of the worst of them.

KENT : One of your clerks ?

PEMBERTON : Yes, sir. That damn' fellow Clive.

KENT : Why, what did he do ?

PEMBERTON : Do ? That fellow, sir, who has not been five minutes in the country, was strutting about the bazaar with a native bearer holding an umbrella over him.

KENT : But surely he knows the rule ?

PEMBERTON : It was done out of sheer impertinence. Moody, sullen, bad-tempered blackguard ! No respect for the law or anyone !

KENT : You warned him, I hope ?

PEMBERTON : Warned him ? Damn it, warning's

no use ! I snatched the umbrella from his bearer, broke it, and flung it into the gutter.

KENT : Quite right. Quite right.

[VINCENT, the little weedy clerk, comes in quickly and runs over to the collection of clerks, and whispers excitedly.

VINCENT : I say, that fellow Clive . . .

[He stops on seeing the merchants, and tries to join his group.

PEMBERTON : Well, sir ? What about him ? Out with it.

[They all rise as he speaks to them. VINCENT at first quails, and then giggles.

VINCENT (ducking and currying favour) : It's Mr. Clive, sir. He is coming to the club in state. He's coming to the club with about six umbrella-bearers, just like a senior merchant !

[There is a noise of jabbering natives. PEMBERTON nearly explodes, but KENT prevents him charging down the steps, and draws him back to a position where he can watch, unseen by CLIVE. CLIVE, in a particularly rebellious and aggressive mood, appears at the entrance to the club. He has several umbrella-bearers and other natives as a bodyguard.

CLIVE gives a good imitation of PEMBERTON dismissing the bearers. They grin and depart. CLIVE comes up the steps and goes to the group of clerks and flings the broken umbrella down.

CLIVE : That's what I think of Councillor Pemberton.

[He sees their faces, glum and frightened.

What the hell's the matter with you all ?

[He follows their eyes, and turns. The three Merchants are coming forward towards him, PEMBERTON leading.

PEMBERTON : Mr. Clive. Come here, sir.

[CLIVE moves. CLIVE and PEMBERTON and the merchant are now centre stage.

(*lowering*) So, sir, you are slow to learn your lesson, it seems. Mr. Kent, would you ask the Governor if he will honour me by coming here?

[*The clerks react to this, and repeat "The Governor."*]

KENT : Certainly. (*He goes into the inner room.*)

PEMBERTON : Now, sir, what excuse have you? You know the rule well enough?

CLIVE : Yes, but I can see no sense in it.

PEMBERTON : Damn it, sir, a rule is a rule !

CLIVE : Yes, but a damn' bad rule remains a damn' bad rule.

PEMBERTON : I—I—the Governor shall deal with you, sir. Stand over there, sir. (*He crosses to the other clerks.*) And you, gentlemen, you would do well to take warning. Oh, I know the talk that goes on. You are dissatisfied, it seems, with the conditions here. Let me tell you, gentlemen, this great Company has been built up by the hard work and endurance of your predecessors. Thanks to us, sir, you enjoy privileges greater than we ever had.

CLIVE : But the salary remains the same.

PEMBERTON (*turning to him*) : Silence. As for you, sir, we have heard something of your reputation. They tell me you were expelled from school for blackmailing shopkeepers for halfpennies under threat of having their windows broken. Yes, and drilling a rabble of urchins in the street and holding up the town in terror. You think you will continue those pranks out here. You are mistaken—mistaken, sir.

[*The GOVERNOR arrives with MR. KENT. He is cold, calm, severe. The other clerks react to this and stand up.*]

PEMBERTON (*seeing him, becomes servile and ingratiating*) : Your Excellency, I must apologise for disturbing you at this hour . . .

GOVERNOR : There is no need to apologise, Mr. Pemberton ; you can rely upon me. (*He looks round.*) Where is this young man ? (*He surveys CLIVE, and then takes in the other clerks.*) If you please, gentlemen, I desire your attention. Mr. Stringer, kindly see that no servants come in for a few minutes.

[STRINGER *hastily crosses to the door.*

The GOVERNOR is now in the centre of the stage with CLIVE.

(*Turning to CLIVE*) Now, sir. I have had complaints about you before. You seem to forget your position here. You are only a clerk—and a very junior one. Upon Councillor Pemberton will depend whether you continue in the service of the East India Company or are sent home in disgrace. Councillor Pemberton, will you come forward, please.

[PEMBERTON *comes forward and waits. The GOVERNOR continues to CLIVE :*

Now, sir, are you prepared to apologise ?

[*A pause. CLIVE does not reply.*

Well, sir ?

CLIVE (*a pause*) : I suppose so.

GOVERNOR : Now, sir.

[*There is a pause while CLIVE struggles against the temptation to let fly.*

CLIVE (*mumbling*) : I—I—oh, I apologise.

GOVERNOR : Very well. See to it that I have no further cause for complaint.

[*He nods to PEMBERTON and goes out. The clerks turn away and whisper. PEMBERTON nods to his group and then comes down to CLIVE.*

PEMBERTON (*patronisingly*) : There, sir, you heard what the Governor said ? Perhaps that will teach you a lesson. And now, to show that I accept your apology, I am willing to let bygones be bygones. You may come and dine with me.

CLIVE : I beg your pardon ?

PEMBERTON : I said—come and dine with me.

CLIVE : Sir,—the Governor ordered me to apologise to you, not to dine with you.

PEMBERTON : Well, I'm—

[He and the other merchants, outraged, go—one or two down the steps, one or two into the inner room. JOHNSON and another clerk turn to go. There is silence. The clerks mutter, "Damn' fool"; "Get us all in his bad books."]

CLIVE is going to flare out when MASKELYNE takes his arm and brings him to a table by themselves. MASKELYNE pours him out a drink, and drinks carefully. CLIVE swallows his at a gulp.

We now notice that EDMUND MASKELYNE is the direct antithesis to CLIVE. He has a great dignity and a precision in manner. The contrast between the two men is important, since, from an audience point of view, MASKELYNE represents the normal respectable citizen, and this attitude throws into relief CLIVE's moody fits, his quick transitions and his sudden explosive outbursts.

CLIVE : Better leave me to myself, Edmund.

MASKELYNE (smiling) : Now you are in the depths of despair again.

CLIVE : I seem hemmed in—and there is no way out.

MASKELYNE : Yet you were a different man that night we escaped from the French at Madras.

CLIVE (*firing up*) : Yes, by God, there was action there—planning—adventure—risk—one was alive. (*He relapses.*) And now here I am back to this damned clerking again.

MASKELYNE : S-sh !

CLIVE (*relapsing into moodiness*) : To sit on a stool from morn till night, filling ledgers, entering up bills, and saying "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," and

“Very good, sir,” to those pompous pigs . . .

MASKELYNE : It won't be for ever.

CLIVE : No. I might become one myself !
Good God, so I might !

MASKELYNE (*smiling*) : No, I can't ever see you like that.

CLIVE (*bursting out*) : I tell you, Edmund, if I thought there was nothing else out here but this kind of life, I'd shoot myself to-night.

MASKELYNE (*soothingly*) : Well, you tried that once—but you promised me never again. That was a promise, mind.

[*With one of his sudden transitions, CLIVE drops his ill-temper. This is the man of vision looking into the future. MASKELYNE treats this aspect of CLIVE with gentle indulgence meted out to a child.*]

CLIVE (*quietly*) : Edmund, there was something queer about that night. Twice I put the pistol to my head and pulled the trigger, and twice it missed fire. Yet when you came in and stopped me trying the third time, you fired it through the open window and it went off well enough.

MASKELYNE : Oh—just a chance, of course.

CLIVE : I wonder. After you had gone that night, I sat for a long time thinking. It came upon me that perhaps I was destined for something after all.

MASKELYNE (*smiling at such talk*) : I am sure you are.

CLIVE (*firing up again*) : But not for clerking, not for loading out muslins and spices and transporting tea for the fat dowagers in Mayfair to gossip over. No, by God, no. And yet there must be something—something I could do.

[*He sinks down and relapses into gloom again.*]

MASKELYNE takes the opportunity to speak seriously to CLIVE, and as he does so, plays with the locket round his neck, emphasising his point with it.

MASKELYNE : Now listen, Bob. When this war with France is over and we can move freely again, things will change. They are bound to. Your moment will come. All you need is patience, patience, and then more patience !

[He has been emphasising his point with the locket, which has come open. CLIVE takes hold of his wrist and looks at the locket.]

What is it ?

CLIVE : That picture !

MASKELYNE : What ? Oh, this locket.

CLIVE : I always wanted to ask you. Who is it ?

MASKELYNE : It's Margaret.

CLIVE : Margaret ?

MASKELYNE : My sister. Haven't you seen it before ?

CLIVE : Often ; for weeks past I've been looking at it, but I never liked to ask you. (*Obviously it is much more than passing interest.*) Can I—can I see it more closely ?

[MASKELYNE, smiling, takes off the locket and passes it to him. CLIVE looks at it a long time.]

(Very quietly) It's a beautiful face. *(Suddenly he looks at MASKELYNE and says)* Would she come out here, do you think ?

MASKELYNE (*puzzled*) : Possibly ; but why ?

CLIVE (*simply*) : I want to marry her.

[This is too much even for MASKELYNE's tolerance.]

MASKELYNE (*rising, annoyed*) : Bob ! Don't joke !

CLIVE (*flaring up*) : By God, Edmund, do you think I would joke on a subject like this, and with this portrait in my hand ?

[The clerks look round and mutter, " Quarrelling with his best friend now."]

MASKELYNE (*soothing him*) : Sit down, Bob. Don't flare up at me. Is it to be wondered that I thought you were joking ?

CLIVE (*indignant*) : Joking ? How could you believe that of me ?

MASKELYNE : I will give you three good reasons why I should think so. You've never met her ; she has never seen you ; and would any man ask a woman to undertake the terrible discomforts of perhaps a year's voyage in order to marry a man she has never seen ? Now come. It's asking a great deal, isn't it ?

[CLIVE *relapses into gloom.*

CLIVE (*mumbling*) : You never know. The more you ask of a woman, the more she will give.

MASKELYNE (*scandalised*) : Bob, really !

CLIVE (*insistent*) : I feel she *would*. (*He plays with the locket.*) I'm sorry, Edmund.

MASKELYNE (*puts a forgiving hand on his arm*) : That's all right.

CLIVE (*returning to the question*) : Then you *will* ask her ?

MASKELYNE (*unable to resist laughing*) : Really, Bob, I don't know what to say to you. You must propose to her, not to me.

CLIVE (*confidently*) : I will when she comes out.

MASKELYNE : Meantime you can write to her.

CLIVE : What ? A year there and a year back—at least two years between letter and answer—we should be old before we'd even met.

MASKELYNE (*at a loss*) : But, Bob, think what it means. Think of the cost of that long voyage. Besides, neither of us has any money.

CLIVE : No. (*A great idea*) We could borrow it off the Jews in the bazaar.

[*This scandalises MASKELYNE again.*

MASKELYNE : Well, really—if it were anyone but you, Bob, I should say it was outrageous.

[CLIVE *drops all pretence and becomes terribly in earnest.*

CLIVE : Edmund, you think I'm mad. Very well then, I *am* mad. I can't tell you how—but there are moments when I just *know* what's **right** for me to do. Just as I suddenly felt, when **that** pistol missed fire, that I was destined for **some**-thing, so I felt, when I looked at the locket, **that** she is the only woman in the world I could **ever** marry.

[*A pause. MASKELYNE doesn't know what to make of him.*]

MASKELYNE : But do you realise . . . ?

CLIVE (*impatiently*) : Yes, yes. I'm only a **clerk**, with nothing to offer your sister. Yet, by the time she could come out, it might be different.

MASKELYNE : Are you sure that umbrella kept the sun off your head this morning ?

[*CLIVE is annoyed, and MASKELYNE puts his hand on his arm.*]

But you must write, Bob, honestly, sincerely, as you spoke to me just now.

[*He looks at him.*]

Bob ! Why, you're trembling like a schoolboy. Are you ill ?

CLIVE : No—no. (*In a half-whisper*) Edmund, I feel she'll come. She'll understand.

MASKELYNE (*rising in alarm*) : Bob ? I've never seen you like this.

CLIVE : By the time she comes out—she will—I must have something to offer her.

[*In the distance a bugle is heard. It is followed by another, and yet another. Clerks begin to rise and go to the door. The effect of the bugle on CLIVE is immediate. He stiffens and stares straight ahead, unmoving. It is, of course, the deciding moment in his life.*]

JOHNSON runs in.

JOHNSON : News has just come. The French are marching to attack the Settlement. . . .

[There is a hubbub from the clerks. They are all more scared than excited.]

MILLER : Damn them. Are we to go through still another siege ?

STRINGER : The Nawab should stop them.

VINCENT : He allowed the French to capture Madras from us, and then he allows them to come on here.

JOHNSON : They say they are several thousand strong, but we shall hold out.

CLIVE (*suddenly*) : Huh !

[There is a moment's silence. They look round at

CLIVE.

JOHNSON : I beg your pardon ?

[CLIVE begins to walk up and down, seething with impatience.]

CLIVE : Hold out ? Do you call ours an army ? Mercenaries swept out of the gaols of Europe.

STRINGER : What do you know about it ?

CLIVE : We lost Madras ; we shall lose this too. The French will soon have all India. . . .

[Protests from the others.]

STRINGER : We shall wait for them here and hold out.

CLIVE : If the army knew its job, it would know that the best defence is to attack.

[The others begin to be derisive, and come round to combine against CLIVE.]

STRINGER : Oh-ho ! (*To the others*) Listen to him ! And what would " General " Clive do ?

JOHNSON : Yes, perhaps he will tell us that.

CLIVE : Why, march against Pondicherry, the French capital.

[They begin to laugh.]

MILLER : With five hundred men ? Very easy. And what about the Nawab ?

CLIVE : If the Nawab won't keep to his bargain, get rid of the Nawab.

[*This brings a shout of derision and contemptuous remarks ; muttered " Damned young fool," etc.*

JOHNSON : Get rid of the Nawab ? You fool ! The whole East India Company's only his tenant.

CLIVE : Tenant ? Tenant ? How long are we going to endure being tenants ?

[*The others burst out laughing again, and break up their combined attack on CLIVE.*

JOHNSON : Oh, leave him alone—the sun has gone to his head.

STRINGER : Come along. Let us get down to the warehouse for news.

[*They move out quickly. STRINGER calls back :*

Perhaps by to-morrow our new General will have matured his plans.

[*They laugh as they go out. A pause. CLIVE remains very still.*

MASKELYNE (*when they have gone*) : What is it, Bob ? Bob ?

CLIVE : Opportunity ! I wanted opportunity, and here it is.

MASKELYNE : Opportunity ?

CLIVE : We've been riding the wrong horse, Edmund. We've been dreaming of trade, of profits, of becoming merchants—fat, pompous merchants—and here's our real chance.

MASKELYNE : The army ?

CLIVE : Yes ; the army's rotten to the core, but it needs a civilian—it needs two—you and me, Edmund. Will you come with me ?

MASKELYNE (*after a pause*) : Yes.

CLIVE : Excellent. I knew the way would come. (*He strides across the stage, and turns.*) We'll go now—to the Governor first—and then—the army—action——

[*The GOVERNOR and the merchants come through hastily. CLIVE stops the GOVERNOR.*

GOVERNOR : Well.

CLIVE : I wish to resign from the East India Company and join the army.

GOVERNOR : What ? Best thing you can do. I can only hope you'll meet with better success there. (*To MASKELYNE*) And you ?

MASKELYNE : Yes, sir.

GOVERNOR : Good. I'll see to it.

[*He goes.*

CLIVE : It's done ! Come on.

MASKELYNE : But, Bob, do you still want me to write to Margaret ?

CLIVE : Of course. Of course. Why, man, with opportunity—who knows where I may be by the time she comes out ?

[*They move to go down the steps.*

MASKELYNE (*laughing*) : Why, you might even have risen to be a full lieutenant in His Majesty's Army by that time.

CLIVE : Who knows ?

MASKELYNE (*treating the idea as a joke*) : I shouldn't wager on that, if I were you.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A Council of the East India Company at a meeting at Fort St. David, three years later.

The better impression we get of seclusion and the self-importance of the group, the more effective is CLIVE's entrance and his brusque treatment of the big-wigs.

There are five present : The GOVERNOR, MANNING, PEMBERTON, KENT, and a silly little man called WARBURTON.

The GOVERNOR is the only one with any gumption.

The whole Council look as if they had been struck by lightning. Most of them are staring straight ahead as if they can see nothing but ruin and despair—which is, indeed, the case.

GOVERNOR (*breaking the silence*) : Well, gentlemen. (*He helps himself to sherry.*) We're in a bad way.

WARBURTON : H'm, that's the last bottle of sherry.

MANNING : Yes, and God knows if we shall ever get any more from England now.

GOVERNOR : I'm afraid there's no doubt about the news.

PEMBERTON : My God, gentlemen, it's terrible ! The whole of the East India Company will be wiped out—and, what's worse, we shall be wiped out with it.

MANNING (*pompously*) : I was against it. I was always against it—I said it was madness to send our whole army to relieve the garrison at Trichinopoli.

[There is a stir outside, and voices.]

GOVERNOR : Here's Sergeant Clark. He may have some news.

[SERGEANT CLARK comes in ; a big husky black-moustached fellow ; very stupid but reliable—the “ Old Bill ” of the eighteenth century. The Council try not to show their great anxiety.]

Well, Sergeant ?

CLARK : A native bearer has just come in, sir—I'm afraid the report's true enough.

MANNING : The whole army surrounded ?

CLARK : Yes, sir.

WARBURTON : My God, we're ruined !

GOVERNOR : Quiet, please.

[There is silence while the GOVERNOR makes up his mind.]

Sergeant, if we comb the whole of the Settlements—take every man available—how many can you get ?

CLARK : Oh, I don't know, sir—one hundred and twenty, perhaps, and some hired natives—but you never know what they'll do.

WARBURTON : But you can't take the guards. We shall all be robbed.

GOVERNOR : Please. There are no officers, of course ?

CLARK : No, sir. *(Suddenly his face lights up a little.)* Might get Mr. Clive, sir, in time.

[The others look at each other.]

PEMBERTON : What ? Ensign Clive ?

KENT : He's with the army in Trichinopoli, isn't he ?

CLARK *(awkwardly)* : Yes, sir. . . .

GOVERNOR *(sharply)* : Then what do you mean, " Might get Mr. Clive " ?

CLARK *(looking at his boots)* : Don't know, sir. He might get out.

MANNING *(looking at him in amazement)* : Get out ? Do you mean, desert ?

CLARK : No, sir ; but—don't know how to say it, sir—but if there is any kind of sortie made from the town, Mr. Clive will be in it ; and—if he is in it, he'll be out of it—if you understand what I mean.

PEMBERTON : I don't.

MANNING : Anyhow, don't let us worry about him——

GOVERNOR : The point is, gentlemen, the army

is surrounded, and we must *do* something
Sergeant, what can you suggest?

CLARK : I—I could gather the guards, sir.

MANNING : But if we take every guard from the
Settlements, we shall have the bandits on us.

CLARK : Yes, sir.

PEMBERTON : Anything else?

CLARK (*solidly*) : Fortify this place as well as
we can, sir.

GOVERNOR (*quickly*) : That means annihilation
in the end. Surely, with over one hundred and
twenty men, *something* could be done?

WARBURTON (*querulous*) : If five hundred can't
relieve Trichinopoli, what can one hundred
and twenty do? Eh, Sergeant?

CLARK : Yes, sir.

GOVERNOR : All right, Sergeant.

[SERGEANT CLARK *goes*.

PEMBERTON (*looking round*) : Well, gentlemen?

[*They all shake their heads*.

We must send to England for reinforcements.

GOVERNOR : We shall all be dead before they
arrive.

WARBURTON (*with a squeak*) : But what can we
do?

PEMBERTON : By gad ! I wish I were a younger
man—nothing would please me better than to
shoulder a musket.

GOVERNOR (*drily*) : Impressive as that might be,
Pemberton, I doubt if it would effect a complete
victory.

[*There are voices off. A man is heard shouting
orders*.

CLIVE (*off*) : Sergeant ! Send to my quarters
and get me some clothes—get me some linen,
for God's sake !—and a pair of boots—

[CLIVE, *mopping his face and limping badly, clumps in.*

And, Sergeant, find out if there is a mail for me from England—quickly, now.

[*He continues swearing and cursing under his breath, with such remarks as : " These damned feet of mine are blistered to hell—God's curse on the thing, why won't it come off ? " etc.*

MANNING (*rising with great dignity*) : Mr. Clive ? What are you doing here ?

CLIVE (*sitting and rubbing his sore feet*) : My God, gentlemen, the very question I was about to ask you. Are you doing anything ?

WARBURTON : Mr. Clive—really, sir—you can't come blundering in here like this—the council is sitting.

CLIVE (*busy making good some repairs to his clothes*) : Let it sit while it can—it'll soon have nothing to sit on.

MANNING : What do you mean, sir ?

CLIVE : The whole British army has got itself bottled up in Trichinopoli. I told the Captain he was a fool to go, but he would do it.

MANNING : You told the Captain, sir ?

CLIVE : There are forty thousand natives round the town, and the French are in command.

MANNING : That, sir, is the fortune of war——

CLIVE : Fortune of fiddlesticks—it is rank incompetence.

PEMBERTON : You, sir, dare to suggest——

[*CLIVE gets up, and starts to tackle them quietly at first. It must be noted that he has come for a special purpose, that transpires later. His attitude is the quiet confidence of the man who is going to get his own way in the end.*

CLIVE : I mean, your army knows no more about war than you do about administration.

MANNING : This is insubordination, sir.

CLIVE : Good. (*He goes to the table and pours out the sherry, copiously.*)

WARBURTON : And that, sir, is the last of the sherry.

CLIVE (*drinking it*) : It's certainly the last of that, anyway. We may soon have no necks to pour it down. That's better. (*He addresses the company ironically*) I thank you for your hearty welcome, gentlemen, and now, may I ask, do you intend to do anything, or do you sit here until they throw us into the sea ?

MANNING : The Council, sir, is considering the matter.

CLIVE : Aha ! And has the all-wise and all-knowing Council discovered some brilliant plan, some masterstroke to relieve the situation ? (*To PEMBERTON*) Have you ? (*To KENT*) Have you ? (*To WARBURTON*) Have you—no, I thought not.

MANNING : The army, sir, is here to protect us. Apparently it has failed.

CLIVE (*quietly*) : Yes, and why ? I'll tell you why. Your officers are out of date ; your men, the sweepings of the gaols. You work them like devils, and pay them like hell—and all to save your miserable profits. (*He lowers his voice*) I tell you, gentlemen, you're going to pay for that now. You've no army left ; Trichinopoli will surrender in a month, and you—you personally, gentlemen, will have to face a native army mad for loot, and the end will be—massacre, gentlemen, massacre.

[*He leaves them staring at each other. There is a pause.* CLIVE *lets it sink home.*]

GOVERNOR (*rising and speaking suavely*) : Mr. Clive has come here to tell us a great many things we already know.

[CLIVE stiffens. The GOVERNOR continues. He is evidently the only competent one.

Now, sir, you asked us if we had some brilliant plan, some masterstroke to deal with the situation. Answering for the Council as a whole, I reply, no. But, in return, will you tell us—have you?

[The others murmur agreement with these sentiments. CLIVE gets up and moves over to the GOVERNOR, and surveys the group at the table.

CLIVE (*wondering*): Well, of course I have. (*Looking round*) Gentlemen, really? Did you think I'd spent three days and three nights crawling on my belly through the enemy's lines for the mere pleasure of seeing you?

GOVERNOR: Ah! So you have a plan?

MANNING: Well, what is it?

[A pause. CLIVE looks at them.

CLIVE: Give me every man you have got, and I'll relieve Trichinopoli.

[They sit back at first, and then all snort contemptuously.

{ MANNING: Oh, is that all?

{ PEMBERTON: Huh! A likely story.

{ WARBURTON: So that is the master-stroke, is it?

GOVERNOR: Quiet, gentlemen, please. (*He goes to CLIVE.*) Mr. Clive, may I ask, have you any idea how many men we could scrape up by using every guard on every Settlement?

CLIVE: Very few—damn' bad troops at that.

GOVERNOR: The most we could gather would be one hundred and twenty.

CLIVE: Very well, that'll have to do.

[Protests from the others break in, and they surround CLIVE, expostulating.

PEMBERTON: You'll get locked up in the place with the others. . . .

KENT : Since five hundred of our best men, officered by our highest in command, cannot relieve Trichinopoli, may I ask how you propose to relieve it with one hundred and twenty ?

CLIVE : I don't propose to go to Trichinopoli at all.

[*The members look at each other.*]

WARBURTON : If you don't propose to go there, how do you propose to relieve it ? That's a good one, answer that.

CLIVE : I will attack Arcot.

[*This is another shock. Then they return to the attack.*]

MANNING : Arcot ?

PEMBERTON : I see. We take the capital of Southern India with one hundred and twenty men—that is all ?

KENT : That is all. Just like that.

WARBURTON : In any case, what has Arcot got to do with it ?

CLIVE (*angrily*) : Any fool with half an eye can see. If I make for Arcot, the capital, half their army round Trichinopoli will rush to retake it.

MANNING : And then—— ?

CLIVE : And then—— (*Dropping his voice*) Sit down, I'll tell you something, my little ones. There are only two ways of attacking an army larger than your own—one is to attack it on the flank, so that it can't use its strength fully, or divide it—and divide it again—and conquer it piecemeal. (*They look at each other*) If I tell you one other thing, you'll have learnt the whole art of war. It is this : A commander always defends his front door—consequently the victory lies with the man who goes round the house to the back.

[*They look bewildered.*]

Now, gentlemen, you know the whole art of

war—the only thing you don't know is, why, since every soldier knows it, so few can put it into practice.

[This is all beyond them, and they look at each other vaguely. CLIVE retires to let them think it over.]

The SERGEANT comes in with his new boots, and he takes them and tries them on.

MANNING (*to the others*) : Well, what do you think ?

WARBURTON (*whispering*) : It's madness. Madness ! We shall leave no one to guard our lives and the Settlements.

CLIVE : Gentlemen, you've no choice. To sit still is to invite massacre. . . . If I fail, we can't be worse off. (*His tone changes to one of simple knowledge.*) Besides, I shan't fail.

[CLIVE comes over to the table, ready for their decision. He is quietly confident.]

GOVERNOR : Well, Gentlemen, what do you say ?

MANNING : I think it is a mad chance. . . .

CLIVE (*abruptly*) : Yes, yes, but do you agree ?

[He does. CLIVE turns to PEMBERTON.]

PEMBERTON : Mr. Clive's rudeness and in-subordination pass belief. . . .

CLIVE : But do you agree ?

PEMBERTON : No—yes, I suppose so.

WARBURTON : And I, sir. . . .

CLIVE (*contemptuously*) : Oh, you'll agree. (*With a certain amount of respect, to the Governor*) And you, sir ?

GOVERNOR : I agree—unreservedly.

CLIVE (*surprised*) : Thank you, sir.

[He stands to attention before the GOVERNOR and then turns.]

GOVERNOR : What arrangements do you want to make ?

CLIVE (*suddenly*) : Ah ! One moment. I've been bitten like this before.

MANNING : Eh ?

CLIVE (*emphatically*) : It is understood that *I* am in command ?

GOVERNOR : Yes.

CLIVE : Solely ?

GOVERNOR : Yes.

CLIVE : There's to be no damned interference on the part of anybody ?

[*There are protests.*]

GOVERNOR (*suavely*) : No, no. You will be in charge, Mr. Clive.

CLIVE : Good. So long as I have your word, sir, I know where I am. (*Calling*) Sergeant.

CLARK : Mr. Clive.

CLIVE : How many men have you here ?

CLARK : Forty-four, Mr. Clive.

CLIVE (*quickly authoritative*) : Assemble them at once. Despatch some of them to the Settlements, and collect every man available by this evening—the halt, lame, blind, sick, drunk, or sober.

CLARK (*cheerfully*) : Yes, Mr. Clive.

MANNING : And when do you propose to set out with this mad army ?

CLIVE : At dawn to-morrow.

PEMBERTON : Your commissariat ?

CLIVE : What we carry in our pockets.

MANNING : And where will you make for first ?

CLIVE : For Arcot. (*Peremptorily*) Haven't you gone yet, Sergeant ?

CLARK (*starting*) : Yes, sir, yes—I have.

[*He goes out very quickly. CLIVE comes to the GOVERNOR.*]

GOVERNOR : And now—you must sleep first.

CLIVE : Sleep ? Not I.

GOVERNOR : Well—eat, then.

CLIVE : Not I. If I don't eat, I needn't sleep. Is there a mail in from England ?

[*There is a pause. They look at each other.*]

WARBURTON : The ship was taken by the French near the coast, and the mail's lost.

[*CLIVE comes to the table, and explodes with rage.*]

CLIVE (*exploding*) : And where the hell was the navy ?

WARBURTON : It was—it was—in port at Bombay.

CLIVE : On the safe side of India ! It would be. Damn it. I've waited six months for a letter announcing an important departure from England—(*he prepares to go, picking up his boots and impedimenta generally*)—and now your blasted navy has let the French capture it—blundering lot of incompetent idiots, sitting on their damned behinds, letting the French capture my mail, etc., etc.

[*He blusters off.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A few months later.

It is EDMUND MASKELYNE's quarters.

MARGARET is dressed for the GOVERNOR's reception, but she is nervous and agitated—and no wonder. She has come out to see, and possibly marry, a junior clerk, a friend of her brother's, by the name of ROBERT CLIVE. Why, she does not know ; only something in his letter had impelled her. And now, before he has ever set eyes on her, he is arriving, not

as a clerk, but as a conqueror. Will he want her now? Possibly not. She knows herself to be in a terribly false position.

Presently EDMUND comes in in a uniform which is creased and untidy. EDMUND is particularly fussy and agitated; the GOVERNOR'S reception for CLIVE means a lot to him. MARGARET comes to him and tries to smooth out the creases.

MARGARET (*as she pulls and pushes*) : You'll never get these creases out. What have you been doing to it?

EDMUND : It was packed away during the campaign, of course. Nice way to turn out for the Governor's reception.

MARGARET : There. It'll have to do. Don't look so worried.

[EDMUND goes over to a desk crowded with papers and sorts them out, standing, and speaks as if very pre-occupied with his arrangements, which have all been cancelled or altered. MARGARET remains staring ahead.]

EDMUND : Worried? Do you wonder? The Governor's furious—a reception being given in honour of Bob's victories—and now—no conqueror to welcome.

MARGARET : Where can he be?

EDMUND : Nobody knows—left the main force outside the town and just rode off with two officers. Here's the army being fêted and no commander. All my arrangements altered—mess up all round. Can't be helped; Bob will do what he thinks, Governor or no Governor—still, you realise what a wonderful thing it is? No civilian soldier ever had a reception in his honour like this.

[He comes over to her, still studying his papers, and looks up for a second at her.]

He's no longer the little clerk I used to write to

you about, eh? Conqueror of Southern India at twenty-seven.

[MARGARET *nods*.

I wish he could have been here.

MARGARET : I can meet him at the reception (*with an effort at cheerfulness*).

EDMUND : Yes, but I wanted you to meet him for the first time *here*.

MARGARET : Why?

EDMUND : Well, it's only natural that if you and he are to——

[MARGARET *turns away*.

Don't be ashamed of a little romance. After all, you *have* come here to——

[MARGARET *stops him*.

MARGARET : Please.

EDMUND : Well, well, very natural. (*Looking at her*) I'm glad you're wearing that dress—I want you to look your best when Bob sees you.

MARGARET : Yes. (*Thinking*) Edmund?

EDMUND : What?

MARGARET : Don't take too much for granted. (*He looks askance at her, and she hastens on*) After all, he knows nothing about me—and I know nothing about him——

EDMUND : Bob will tell you about himself fast enough; he's full of his future. He—he wants understanding, you know.

MARGARET : I don't even know what he looks like.

EDMUND : He's a little terrifying at times—a grand man with men, but women don't understand his manner. He's so terribly *direct*—frightens them, I think. I've got to give these orders out; you'll be ready when I return, won't you?

[MASKELYNE *goes out*.

MARGARET *covers her face with her hands.*

The AYAH comes in and MARGARET notices her. At once she becomes anxious and secretive.

MARGARET (*with an air of secrecy*) : Did you find the Sergeant for me ?

AYAH : Yes, Missie Sahib. He is here.

MARGARET : Let him come in.

[SERGEANT CLARK *appears, his arm in a sling. In the presence of the lady he appears very awkward and ill at ease, and not at all talkative at first.*

CLARK : Yes, Miss Maskelyne ?

MARGARET (*confused*) : You are Sergeant Clark ?

CLARK : Yes, miss.

MARGARET (*at a loss*) : Oh, you were all through the great campaign with Captain Clive ?

CLARK : Captain—Colonel—Lord knows what he'll be by now, miss.

MARGARET : Sit down.

[*The Sergeant, very confused, hesitates, and does so, looking very awkward.*

CLARK : Thank you, miss. (*He waits.*)

MARGARET (*with a catch in her breath*) : What—what sort of a man is he ?

CLARK : Haven't you met him, miss ?

MARGARET : No—not yet. Tell me—oh—er—will you— (*She offers him a drink.*)

CLARK : I am not supposed to, miss, while I have got this (*pointing to his arm*). Do me no harm. My respects, miss.

MARGARET : Tell me something about him.

CLARK (*stupidly*) : About him, miss ?

MARGARET : I mean about the taking of Arcot—the relief of Trichinopoli—about the whole campaign in general.

CLARK (*woodenly*) : Well, miss, don't know a

how I could tell you much about the campaign—being a soldier, I don't see much of it.

MARGARET : But you were in it ?

CLARK : Yes, miss—that's it, you see. (*Ill at ease*) Not much to tell, miss. " We'll take Arcot," he says—and he takes it. " We'll relieve Trichy," he says, and he does it. (*He seeks refuge in drink.*)

MARGARET (*desperately*) : Yes, but how—*how* ?

CLARK (*woodenly*) : Dunno how it's done, miss.

MARGARET : How could a hundred and twenty men defeat a whole army and take a capital ?

CLARK : Yes, that's so ! (*And then, with an inspiration*) Ah ! Lightning !

MARGARET : Lightning ?

CLARK : Ever been through an Indian thunder-storm, miss ?

MARGARET : No ; I have only just arrived out here.

CLARK : Well, we have ; we marched through it, and the worst storm that's ever been known. The Mad Army they called us—marching by night by lightning—it was too much for 'em . . . they reckoned we was gods. I ask you, miss—me a blooming go—pardon me—Indian god. The native army fled ; Arcot surrendered.

MARGARET : And then . . . ?

CLARK (*reminiscently*) : It was prime at first. Then the Trichy Army sent twenty thousand against us. But the Captain, he knows a thing or two. He leaves a few of us in front, and out he goes with all the rest of us—round to the back door, as you might say—and they thought a whole new army was coming, and split up—and then we had 'em. (*Another inspiration*) Maybe that's what you meant by campaigning ? Yes, that's how it was.

MARGARET : Tell me—Captain Clive, was he wounded ?

CLARK : Well—— (*He suddenly begins a bucolic chuckle.*) Yes, miss, he was.

MARGARET (*anxiously*) : Badly ?

CLARK (*still chuckling*) : Yes, miss, pretty bad—that's where the joke comes in.

MARGARET : Joke ?

CLARK (*carried away by his own story*) : You see, miss, when we went on to Trichy, we had marched day and night—this back door business may be good campaigning, but it's hard on the feet. We were all dead beat. We thought the French was miles away, but they wasn't. They caught us napping proper—at night, too. First thing we knew they were firing into us from all sides. . . . Yes, it was a—(*heaven knows what he nearly says*)—bad time, miss.

MARGARET : But what is there to laugh at ?

CLARK (*still chuckling*) : Captain Clive, miss, he come out of his tent in his night-shirt, with his legs all bare. Somehow he got a cut across the head, and there he was, held up by two sergeants, going straight for the hottest place in the fight, which was a pagoda.

MARGARET : Were you one of the sergeants ?

CLARK : Why, no, miss. If I had been I wouldn't be here, for they was both shot dead right and left of him—yes, right and left.

MARGARET : He was alone ?

CLARK : Yes, miss. And what d'ye think he done ? He walked straight up to the pagoda, cool as you like, and he says to them, "Throw down your arms," he says, "you're surrounded. It being dark, they couldn't see whether they was or they wasn't. "I've come to offer you terms," he says, "and unless you surrender you'll all be cut to pieces." It was the way he said it, you see, miss. It was grand. And by the time we got up to him, he had 'em all lined up

ready to move off. Next day the army couldn't march for laughing.

MARGARET : Oh——

CLARK (*anxiously*) : Nothing wrong, miss ? Perhaps I shouldn't have told you about the night-shirt.

MARGARET : No, no, no, I'm very grateful to you.

[*The AYAH appears and beckons to MARGARET. She hastily gives the Sergeant a present of money and edges him away, as if anxious he should not be seen.*

CLARK (*going*) : Thank you, miss. You'd have laughed, too, miss, if you'd been there. You'll see him to-night, miss—you ask him about it——

MARGARET : Yes—yes, I will——

CLARK : Good night, miss. Couldn't march for laughing, that's a fact they couldn't—didn't even grumble about anything—that'll show you.

[*He goes out, still chuckling over his story.*

MARGARET, *left alone, is more disturbed than ever. Her instinct is to run away—she is afraid of this man. MASKELYNE returns hastily, runs to his desk, puts his papers down as he speaks.*

EDMUND : Well, we found out where he is, but that doesn't help us. He went twenty miles out of his way to destroy the great monument of victory put up by the French. Good idea, of course—impress the natives—but he's upset every blessed arrangement I've made and the Governor's dancing with rage.

MARGARET : Then he won't come ?

EDMUND : Oh, yes, he's on his way, but he'll have to go straight to the reception just as he is—and a nice sight that'll be. Well, you'll have to meet him there.

[*MARGARET suddenly seizes his arm.*

MARGARET : Edmund, listen to me and try to understand. I—I—can't meet this man.

EDMUND : But why ?

MARGARET (*desperately*) : Don't you see ? Oh, how can I explain ? I came out here to meet a clerk, getting five pounds a year, who was your friend. There (*she is ashamed*)—there was some idea of—he'll think I expect him to marry me. Oh, why did you send for me ! Why did I come !

EDMUND : Margaret, it's no use backing out of it. If Bob wants to see you, he'll see you. If he wants to ask you to marry him, he'll ask you—you don't know him.

MARGARET : That's just it. See him first, I implore you—let him know somehow that I expect nothing—nothing—nothing. I'm just your sister on a visit here.

EDMUND : Yes. But it won't be any good. Won't you come with me ?

MARGARET : No.

EDMUND : Well——

MARGARET : Yes, yes, you must go. Tell them I have a headache—anything ; let him meet me casually some day—not yet, I beg you.

EDMUND : As you will, my dear.

MARGARET : If I seem to be—even unfriendly, it will only be that I wish him to know that I expect nothing.

[*There is the sound of a distant bugle, and faint cheers are heard.*

The bugle-call is taken up by others, and closer.

EDMUND : He's arrived in the town. (*They look at each other.*) Are you sure you won't come and meet him ?

MARGARET : No, no. (*She sinks into a chair.*)

EDMUND (*giving it up*) : I don't know what I shall say to him. He'll probably walk out of the Governor's reception, and come straight here.

MARGARET : I shall go to bed.

EDMUND : That won't stop Bob.

[He goes out.]

MARGARET : Ayah !

[The AYAH comes in.]

Take these things to my room.

AYAH : Missie Sahib not going ?

MARGARET : No, I stay here.

[There are other far-off cheers, very faint, and then sounds at which MARGARET raises her head. The AYAH, hearing them, goes to the doorway.]

AYAH (*excitedly*) : It is he !

MARGARET (*alarmed*) : Who ?

AYAH : The great Sahib.

MARGARET : My brother ?

AYAH : Clive Sahib.

MARGARET (*alarmed*) : It is impossible. Oh ! Tell him I've gone to the reception—he'll find my brother there—tell him anything.

[Still maintaining her dignity she braces herself up for the meeting from which she cannot escape.]

There is a clatter outside, a jingle of spurs, and CLIVE's voice is heard calling EDMUND.

In a few moments, CLIVE, dusty and travel-worn, comes in impetuously. CLIVE is definitely dirty, dishevelled and untidy. He has ridden twenty miles in the heat, and he should look it or the following scene loses half its point. MARGARET remains transfixed. The two stare at each other until she has to hold on to the table for support.

CLIVE's manner changes completely. This is the woman he has waited for. He comes firmly towards her, never taking his eyes off her.

CLIVE (*after a long pause*) : You are Margaret ? You're like your portrait. (*He repeats in a lower voice*) Yes, you are Margaret. (*He means the MARGARET he has dreamed of.*)

[MARGARET *tries to keep up her pretence of dignity, but is willing,*

MARGARET (*in a whisper*) : The reception ! The Governor !

CLIVE (*not taking his eyes off her*) : They can wait. (*He advances to her inexorably*) Tell me. You came out to marry me ?

[MARGARET *almost gasps at the direct question.*
Tell me. You did ? Didn't you ?

[*All MARGARET's subterfuge goes. She meant to say "No."*

MARGARET (*finally*) : Yes. I did. (*She turns away.*)
Oh, that was terrible !

CLIVE (*looking down at her*) : It was magnificent !

MARGARET : Yes, but now . . .

CLIVE : Now ?

MARGARET : Don't you see ? It is different—I didn't know you then ; I hadn't even seen you.

CLIVE : You mean that I'm— (*The conqueror becomes scared himself. He becomes self-conscious and apologetic.*) I know—I realise—I am perhaps not what you expected—I know I'm not good-looking. (*He becomes conscious of the state of his clothes.*) I shouldn't have come to you like this—I'm dusty, dirty—look at my hands—they're terrible—

MARGARET (*relenting at once and moving up to him*) : Oh, no—no—no—it isn't that.

CLIVE (*bluntly*) : Then what ?

MARGARET : I beg you—I implore you—don't think anything more of our arrangement.

CLIVE (*inexorably*) : Why not ?

MARGARET : You're a great man now—you've all India at your feet.

[CLIVE *ceases to be the lover for a moment and becomes the man who loved ostentation.*

CLIVE (*swelling*) : Huh ! That's nothing ! You'll see ! I'm little better than the clerk you expected

—as yet ; we've only got a corner of India so far ; there is the rest of it to conquer, to organise.

MARGARET : Yes ?

CLIVE : I've only just begun. You'll see—I shall be rich—I shall be in Parliament—I'll have estates, a house in Berkeley Square—you will have your carriage, and one day you'll be "milady."

[He feels rather fine, laying all this, as it were, at her feet. MARGARET smiles at his boasting, and then pricks the bubble gently.]

MARGARET : And have you nothing else to offer me but that ?

[CLIVE is genuinely perplexed for a moment. What else can he offer ? All his self-assurance goes.]

CLIVE : Well—nothing but myself—

[He stops, realising that that is exactly what she means. He continues now very humbly, adding :

If that would be anything.]

MARGARET (*quietly*) : It would be all.

CLIVE : All !

[He is overwhelmed at that, and remains looking at her, in another second he would fall at her feet.]

MARGARET *suddenly remembers her position.*

MARGARET : You must go—to the reception. You owe it to the Governor.

[CLIVE goes off into a tantrum again.]

CLIVE (*flaring up*) : I owe them nothing. Every regular soldier out here has done his best to spike my guns. They hate me, because I win battles against their regulations. (*He stops abruptly, and after a pause comes back to her and says sharply*) Why aren't you at the reception ?

MARGARET (*smiling*) : I was frightened of meeting you.

CLIVE (*bluntly*) : Why ? (*It comes to him*) Ah ! You thought I had changed. You thought that ? You did, didn't you ?

MARGARET : Don't bully me ! Yes.

CLIVE : You didn't know me.

[He turns away, and then returns and says peremptorily :

We will go to the reception—

[She starts.

—together—

[She begins to protest.

Yes, we'll go—now !

MARGARET (*sharply*) : No !

CLIVE (*carried away with the idea*) : Yes—as my guest of honour. They can't refuse—I'll demand it. I shall get my way ; you'll see.

[In his exuberance he takes her hand and sweeps her to the exit.

Come, it will be a magnificent beginning for us.

MARGARET : A beginning ?

[CLIVE drops his voice to one of deep sincerity.

CLIVE : Of our life. And may the end—when it comes—be something like this—

[He, involuntarily, has taken her hand. In another second he would have embraced her, when he suddenly remembers how untidy and dishevelled he is. He hesitates, looks ashamed, and mutters like a boy :

Forgive me—I'm not fit to touch you—my hands—my clothes—I must look terrible.

[MARGARET looks at him a long time. Suddenly carried away, she kisses him lightly.

CLIVE (*overwhelmed*) : That's courage. My God, courage !

[From the doorway she impulsively puts out her hand to him.

MARGARET : Come, then . . .

[They go off together.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

Three years later (1755).

Queen's Square, London. It is the drawing-room upstairs. Double doors at the back, and the entrance from the corridor is on the right.

It is CLIVE's house—his first home with MARGARET. His favourite chair, his footstool, the side-table with certain things of his placed "just so." The furniture is set here as it will be in the last scene of the play.

The group of fashionable people of the period are collected in CLIVE's house. CLIVE's affairs are desperate, and the only person who does not know how desperate they are is MARGARET, who is too taken up with her child. The child is very ill.

The group consists of a dowager, LADY STANLEY ; LORD DALMAYNE, a fat little gossip of fifty ; the HON. GEOFFREY ST. AUBYN, a very effeminate young man with a powdered face ; and LADY LINLEY, a "blue-stocking" of the period and a dress reformer. LADY LINLEY is always chafing at the idea of CLIVE being "tied," as she considers it, to a woman like MARGARET, who cannot help him in his career. The group at present are talking in low tones of CLIVE's affairs.

An AYAH comes in with a tray and medicine-glass and crosses to the double doors and goes in.

LADY STANLEY : Who's going to tell her the news ?

LORD DALMAYNE : One can't help feeling sorry for poor little Mrs. Clive.

ST. AUBYN : Hasn't she any idea of the state of his affairs ?

LADY LINLEY (*indicating the inner room*) : No ; one of her brats is ill, and one can get no sense out of her.

LORD DALMAYNE : Poor little woman—not a success in Society, I'm afraid. . . .

LADY STANLEY : She is certainly no help to him in that way.

LADY LINLEY : All great men seem to marry insignificant women. . . .

[MARGARET comes in. She is dressed very much more simply than the others, is a little untidy and very distraught. She knows she ought to attend to her callers, but she cannot fix her mind on them. The moment they see her they cease to whisper together.]

MARGARET : Please forgive me for neglecting you . . .

[They protest.]

. . . but Sir Kynaston is attending the child, and I cannot leave the sick-room. I—please excuse me.

[She goes over to a huge work-box which is used as a medicine-chest and searches for something. The others make conversation obviously as follows :

ST. AUBYN : Lord Dalmayne, do tell us what you thought of Garrick's Hamlet ?

LORD DALMAYNE : Shakespeare—in modern dress—ridiculous. I dislike it.

ST. AUBYN : A dull play—I find no wit in it.

LADY STANLEY : Mr. Garrick is always charming—even as Hamlet.

[MARGARET finds what she wants, comes back, is about to speak, and then, in a flutter, goes off into the inner room.]

LADY LINLEY (scornfully) : A hen—nothing more.

[The others instinctively group together again.]

LADY STANLEY : They say he's ruined—hasn't a penny.

LADY LINLEY : Do you wonder at that, with all this absurd ostentation ?

ST. AUBYN : They say that his election to the House cost him five thousand pounds.

LORD DALMAYNE : Some of the electors died of over-eating at his expense.

ST. AUBYN : Before or after they'd voted ?

LADY STANLEY : Oh, after they'd voted. Clive is far too good a general not to see to that.

LADY LINLEY : Disgraceful.

ST. AUBYN : No worse than the other side. They let all the prisoners out of gaol, drove them to the poll, and then locked them up again.

LORD DALMAYNE : Gad, that was clever.

[*An Indian servant announces Mrs. NIXON. Mrs. NIXON, an ultra-fashionable young woman of the period, sweeps in.*]

MRS. NIXON : Ah, so you are all ahead of me with the news ? The vultures have gathered to pick over the corpse.

LORD DALMAYNE : Mrs. Nixon, your servant. Is this report true that you are to be married again ?

MRS. NIXON : Yes, and, my dears, according to the new law, we actually have to have the banns published in a church, telling everybody of our intentions.

ST. AUBYN : I think it's disgusting—the principle, I mean.

MRS. NIXON : So like washing one's dirty linen in public.

LADY LINLEY (*grimly*) : Well, if it needs washing . . .

MRS. NIXON (*seeing her*) : Dear, still thinking out charming things to say to your friends. (*Dropping her voice*) I—suppose you've heard that your wonderful Bob Clive is unseated in Parliament ?

LADY LINLEY : Of course I have.

MRS. NIXON : Does Mrs. Clive know ?

LADY LINLEY : No.

MRS. NIXON (*sweetly to Lady Linley*) : Of course, that's why you're here. Naturally you'd like to be the first to tell her.

[SIR KYNASTON FRITH *comes out of the double doors and bows to the ladies.*

LADY STANLEY, *who adores him, gushes over him at once.*

LADY STANLEY : Ah, Sir Kynaston ! Don't tell me. You have effected a complete cure, I am sure.

SIR KYNASTON : I wish I could say so.

MRS. NIXON : What is it ? Not measles, I hope.

SIR KYNASTON : No ; something far more serious, I am afraid.

LADY LINLEY (*impatiently*) : I suppose she has no time even to give a thought to her husband's affairs ?

SIR KYNASTON : For the moment her head is full of the child.

LADY LINLEY : Children are well enough, but here is a man of purpose——

MRS. NIXON : He is so rude to everybody.

LADY LINLEY : Yes, but what fire !

MRS. NIXON : Ah, my dear, you see nothing wrong in him—except perhaps his choice of wife.

LADY LINLEY : He should have married a strong-minded woman.

MRS. NIXON (*sweetly*) : Like you, dear ?

LADY LINLEY : *Any* strong-minded woman.

SIR KYNASTON : He'd probably have killed her.

LORD DALMAYNE : What will he do, do you think ? Go back to India ?

LADY LINLEY : If he does, would she go with him ?

SIR KYNASTON : Certainly not. She couldn't leave the child now.

LADY STANLEY : The child ? Oh, surely there are nurses . . .

SIR KYNASTON : No. The poor boy will need his mother . . . badly.

[MARGARET comes out at the double doors. She is perplexed and unable to think. She hurries to the cabinet and takes something out; goes back to the door and gives it to the AYAH. She meets SIR KYNASTON on his way out.

MARGARET : There is nothing else I can do ?

SIR KYNASTON : I'm afraid not.

MARGARET (*pleading*) : You'll come back . . . this evening ?

SIR KYNASTON : Certainly, if you wish it.

MARGARET : Please. He likes to see you.

SIR KYNASTON : Very well.

[*He bows to the ladies and goes.*

The others look at each other and nod, to suggest the time has now come to tell MARGARET.

LORD DALMAYNE (*in a low voice*) : We'd better prepare her for the worst.

[MARGARET makes a great effort to attend to her callers. They wait grimly. They see she cannot collect her thoughts.

MRS. NIXON : And how is the child ?

MARGARET : Not . . . not so well to-day.

LADY LINLEY (*sternly*) : Mrs. Clive—we thought you ought to know something—about your husband.

MARGARET (*vaguely*) : Oh yes . . . (*And then, with a flash of interest*) He isn't ill ? An accident—tell me—— ?

MRS. NIXON : No, no.

LADY LINLEY : Things went very badly for him to-day . . . I am afraid you'll have to bear the blow bravely.

MARGARET (*wild-eyed*) : What is it ?

LADY LINLEY : He has lost his seat in Parliament.

MARGARET (*relieved*) : Oh ! Is that all ?

LADY LINLEY : Surely you realise——

MARGARET (*apologetically*) : I know very little of his affairs, but I know that they keep him from home a great deal—and I would like him to be here more . . . with the children ; they scarcely see him.

LADY LINLEY (*indignantly*) : But surely you are ambitious for him.

MARGARET (*vaguely*) : Ambitious ! But he has already achieved as much as any man could in a life-time. (*With an air of relief*) But now it may be different—we can settle down . . . there won't be so much for him to do . . . perhaps he'd have more time for *us*.

[LADY LINLEY and MRS. NIXON *look at each other*.

LADY LINLEY : I think you should know also that . . .

[MRS. NIXON *stops her*.

MRS. NIXON (*tactfully*) : My dear, you must certainly be prepared for changes. In some ways it's a pity you could not prevent his lavishness—keeping up this establishment, for instance—it must have cost a fortune. . . .

ST. AUBYN : An entire fortune, I should say.

MARGARET : I know, it frightens me, but what can I do ? I don't want these things. . . .

LADY STANLEY : What then, my dear, do you want ?

MARGARET : I haven't thought—just him . . . happiness . . . the children. A cottage would be enough.

MRS. NIXON : A cottage and a home ! Romantic

LADY LINLEY (*bitterly*) : All you want is just domesticity.

MARGARET : Oh, but he is ill. He has always had these terrible headaches—sometimes he can hardly hold up his head. He . . . he needs rest.

MRS. NIXON (*sweetly*) : Yes, dear. What you really mean is that you want him to need you.

[CLIVE comes in, moody, sullen, like a thunder-cloud. He bows slightly to the ladies. He kisses MARGARET and looks round. Obviously he wants to speak to MARGARET privately.]

CLIVE (*abruptly*) : Forgive me—I wish to speak to my wife.

LADY LINLEY (*excusing his rudeness*) : Of course, of course—I understand.

[*They begin to drift to the door.*]

MRS. NIXON : We only came to say how sorry we were that——

CLIVE (*putting her out of countenance*) : Thank you.

LORD DALMAYNE : If, of course, there is anything we can do——

CLIVE : Again I thank you. No.

LADY LINLEY (*beginning a speech*) : You, Robert Clive, are one of those men . . .

CLIVE : Oh, for God's sake do as I ask you . . . go !

MARGARET (*protesting*) : Bob, dear, really !

[*The men go.*]

LADY LINLEY : No, no. He is quite right. Good day, Mrs. Clive.

MRS. NIXON (*as she goes*) : What manners the man has !

LADY LINLEY : Yes, but how virile !

[CLIVE and MARGARET are left alone.]

CLIVE (*muttering*) : Damned chattering females cluttering up the place . . .

MARGARET : But, Bob, they are your friends !

CLIVE : No longer, thank heaven. We are out of it. God, I am tired, tired ! (*He sinks into a chair and collapses. He takes her hand and puts it to his forehead. She mothers him a little, moistening her fingers with lotion from one of the bottles.*)

[*This scene is duplicated, under different conditions, in the last scene of the play.*]

That's better. Yes, that's better. Your hands

are wonderful. Sometimes I think that if I could not come back to you, all this venturing would not be worth while.

MARGARET : Well, is it ?

[He looks up at her. Then he has to break the news to her. He is rather on the defensive.]

CLIVE : Margaret, we're ruined.

MARGARET : Yes, dear.

CLIVE : Don't you understand ?

MARGARET : Yes, dear. But aren't you rather glad ?

CLIVE : Glad ?

MARGARET : You'll have more time for us now. We could settle down . . . in the country somewhere, perhaps. I see so little of you, and we planned so much on our way home from India.

CLIVE : My dear, my dear, don't you realise ? My money has gone—I am ruined.

[This is a complete surprise for MARGARET. She stares at him.]

MARGARET : But you always told me . . .

CLIVE : Yes, yes, yes. It was right for you to have everything while we could.

MARGARET (*shocked by the unfairness of it*) : Oh, but, Bob—I never wanted all this—I have asked you many times if all this expense was necessary.

CLIVE : Well, there it is. I wanted to continue to serve my country here, I've fought election after election, but I've lost. It's taken every penny I had. We have nothing left.

MARGARET (*timidly*) : We have ourselves, haven't we ? (*Then with sudden anxiety*) Bob, you have decided something ! You have made up your mind. What is it ? What are you going to do ?

CLIVE (*shifting uneasily*) : Margaret—as soon as I learnt that I was unscathed—I went straight

from the House to the East India Company. They need me out there. I—I agreed to go.

MARGARET (*breathlessly*) : And . . . tell me . . .

CLIVE : I must sail to-morrow . . .

MARGARET : To-morrow ?

CLIVE : There is no other ship for weeks.

MARGARET : And I thought we'd come back for good—that this was to be our home.

CLIVE : But we'll have another home. We shall be rich again—richer than we ever dreamed of. This house is nothing ; we will have a mansion in Berkeley Square—an estate in the country . . .

MARGARET : Bob ! Don't ! Do you really think I want these things ?

CLIVE : What ?

MARGARET : This is enough, surely. It is our home, Bob. Doesn't that mean anything to you ?

CLIVE : Yes, yes.

MARGARET : Wherever we went, I should always want this room—our room—like this, with all our special things around us. We had such joy over arranging it when we first came. I have loved it all (*she deliberately stresses her next words, to prepare him*), and now, *without you*, it will be nothing. . . .

CLIVE : Yes, yes, it's a pity. (*Suddenly*) What do you mean—"without me" ?

MARGARET (*evasive*) : Why, you said—you go to-morrow.

CLIVE : Yes. (*Looking up*) I go to-morrow ? . . . We go to-morrow !

[*She looks at him for several seconds.*]

MARGARET : It may not be possible—

CLIVE (*completely surprised*) : Not come ? Not be with me ?

MARGARET : You'd be better without me, in any case.

CLIVE (*again at sea*) : Without you ? I can't do without you ; you know that.

MARGARET : You really want me ?

CLIVE (*amazed*) : Want you ? (*Suddenly*) What have those damned women been saying ?

MARGARET : Nothing . . . nothing . . .

CLIVE : Tell me—tell me !

MARGARET (*in a dead voice*) : What everybody says—that I've failed you—I've not helped in your career.

CLIVE (*under his breath*) : " Career."

MARGARET : I heard one of them say, " All great men marry insignificant women."

CLIVE : " Insignificant " . . . ah ! That Linley woman—damned blue-stocking. Margaret—

[*He sees she is standing before him with her eyes closed.*

Tears ? From you ? (*Exploding*) God's curse on them ! They've hurt you—

[*He picks her up firmly and puts her gently on his chair.*

Don't listen to them, Margaret ; listen to me. Your eyes, my dear ; take this handkerchief. By God, I wish I had my hands on them ! Margaret. . . . (*At a loss for words*) What can I say ? There are no words. (*He thinks and thinks what to say.*) Margaret, if I could walk into that bungalow in India and see you again for the first time . . . I should be at your feet, as I am now.

MARGARET (*overwhelmed at this*) : Oh, Bob !

CLIVE : My dear ?

MARGARET : Thank you.

[*They remain silent.*

CLIVE (*gently*) : They should have said that it is I who fail you.

MARGARET : Fail me ?

CLIVE : I've given you little of all those things I promised . . .

MARGARET (*clutching him*) : Youshan't say that—you shan't. If—if there have been difficult times, there have been wonderful times, haven't there?

[*They look at each other. He nods.*]

What woman can ask more? You are—what you are; I want nothing else.

[*CLIVE now feels the victory is his.*]

CLIVE (*more cheerfully*) : So, you see, there can be no talk of your not coming. Of course you will.

[*MARGARET becomes alarmed.*]

MARGARET : But . . . (*She looks round at the door where the child is.*)

CLIVE : I couldn't face it alone. I can go on and on until my head cracks, so long as I have you to turn to in the end. That's it. That's it. Why, often in the days I have just been through the thought has come to me, soon it will be over; I can run to her. I'm like a little child in my need of you.

MARGARET : Bob—

CLIVE (*as he thinks, the fear in his voice rises*) : Go out there . . . without you? I should break down—I couldn't face it—I should kill myself. (*He turns to her.*) So you see?

MARGARET (*hesitatingly*) : But the child, Bob; the child is ill.

CLIVE : Ill? Yes, yes, I know. He must have every care whilst we are away. . . .

[*MARGARET faces him suddenly.*]

MARGARET : Yes, but . . . he—he may not live.

CLIVE : What?

MARGARET : Yes. For a long time I wouldn't face it, but now I must. There's no hope.

CLIVE (*aghast*) : But he shall have the very best attention, the King's own physician . . . everything.

[MARGARET looks into his eyes.

MARGARET (*slowly*) : It will not be enough.

[CLIVE stands transfixed as he realises that she is not coming with him. Gradually he accepts it as inevitable. He must go alone.

CLIVE (*stunned*) : No hope ! Forget all I said—of course you must stay here. I shall manage . . . there will be a great deal to do. No, no, you can't, you *can't* come now. To a mother the child must come first always—yes, yes. (*Dully*) Can I see him ? Will you tell the servants to begin packing ? A year—two years—it's not long—think no more of it, my dear. I shall manage quite well alone. . . .

[It must be quite clear that he is viewing his loneliness with horror. He moves away from her, his shoulders drooping. He goes out—a tragic figure.

MARGARET rings, and then sits looking straight ahead of her.

The door to the inner room is ajar and voices can be heard—CLIVE's and something that sounds like the child.

The housekeeper, MRS. CLIFFORD, comes in.

MARGARET : Mrs. Clifford. Give orders to pack the master's things quickly.

MRS. CLIFFORD : Yes, madam.

MARGARET : He leaves for India to-morrow.

MRS. CLIFFORD : To-morrow ? Yes, madam. I will hurry.

MARGARET : And—Mrs. Clifford ?

MRS. CLIFFORD : Yes, madam ?

[She waits so long that MRS. CLIFFORD repeats : Madam ?

[MARGARET is trying to say the words, but they won't come.

MARGARET : Put my things together too. I will come up presently to pack. . . .

MRS. CLIFFORD : Madam ? You are going—to India ?

MARGARET : You heard what I said—India.

MRS. CLIFFORD : But, madam—the child . . .

MARGARET (*turning away*) : Don't. Yes. Pack, I say. Pack !

[*The housekeeper looks amazed, and then retires.*

MARGARET *sinks on to the sofa, staring ahead. Through the open door one can just hear the sound of a child laughing a little, and a chuckle, and CLIVE's voice.*

We see the effect on MARGARET.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Two years later. Calcutta.

Clive's quarters in the Fort.

MASKELYNE, *who is with him, has evidently just returned from a long journey, and has made a report.*

CLIVE *is pacing up and down, fuming.*

CLIVE : Well, what have the noble Council at Madras got to say ?

MASKELYNE (*glancing over the contents of the official report*) : They congratulate you upon your brilliant administration. The recapture of Calcutta has brought great joy to the Government at home ;

[CLIVE *snorts.*

the French power has ceased to exist, the Black Hole is avenged, and your treaty with Suraj ud Dowlah is described as masterly.

CLIVE : H'm.

MASKELYNE : Oh ! There's to be a presentation from the Council.

CLIVE (*with sudden interest*) : Presentation? Good.
MASKELYNE : The presentation will take the form of a letter of thanks.

CLIVE : Huh ! And my urgent request for money ?

MASKELYNE : Ah ! That's impossible. But they add, there'll be opportunities for you to make money out here for yourself. (*He shows the paper.*)

CLIVE : Aha ! I see. Very well. Very well. We'll take them at their word, but, remember, it was they who gave me leave. I am glad to have you back. (*This is the end of this reunion scene with MASKELYNE. Now CLIVE sits looking ahead, his mind on the business in hand.*) There is much to do.

MASKELYNE : Still ?

CLIVE (*grimly*) : Does the noble Council at Madras think my work out here has ended ?

MASKELYNE : Yes, of course.

CLIVE : Yet, Edmund, whilst we talk here, Suraj ud Dowlah is conspiring with the French, the Mahrattas, and the Afghans to sweep us out of the country.

MASKELYNE : What ? But do the Council here know ?

CLIVE : They won't believe it.

MASKELYNE : How bad is it ?

CLIVE : Edmund, we've been through much together, yet I tell you that never—not even at Arcot—have the British been in a more dangerous position.

MASKELYNE : Does Margaret know ?

CLIVE (*gravely*) : No. She's urging me to go home, as I promised, at the end of two years.

MASKELYNE : But——?

CLIVE : Yet, if I go now, in six months the country will be overrun—I know it.

MASKELYNE : What are you going to do ?

[CLIVE continues in his matter-of-fact way.

CLIVE : This. I shall drag down the Nawab from his throne, and set up his uncle Jaffar in his place.

[MASKELYNE *stares at him, bewildered.*

MASKELYNE (*aghast*) : *Depose* the Nawab ? Bob ! You can't do that. Why, he is King of all Northern India.

CLIVE : After the Black Hole, do you think we can allow him to continue to be master. The man who put our people to that torture is a monster. He cannot continue to rule.

MASKELYNE : Depose the Nawab !

CLIVE (*easily ; continuing his plan*) : The new Nawab, Jaffar, will then take his orders from me.

MASKELYNE (*more amazed*) : A Nawab take orders from the British ?

CLIVE (*shortly*) : Why not ?

MASKELYNE : But, Bob, it's unheard of. It's—why, the British are only on sufferance here.

CLIVE (*easily*) : We can't go on at the mercy of every whim of the Nawab. In the end, we shall have to rule or get out.

MASKELYNE : Rule ? That's something new.

CLIVE : You think I'm mad ? Oh, yes, you do—they all do. Well, I am, thank God !

MASKELYNE : It's stupendous—and we haven't three thousand men out here.

CLIVE : I know 'em—to a man.

MASKELYNE : But how will you negotiate with Jaffar at the Nawab's Palace ?

CLIVE (*shortly*) : I deal through Omichand.

[*This time, MASKELYNE is really alarmed.*

MASKELYNE : Omichand ? Bob, be careful. He is the most cunning and treacherous scoundrel in all India.

CLIVE (*carelessly*) : Yes, yes, yes. I shall outwit him.

MASKELYNE : *You will outwit Omichand?*
(*Words fail him.*)

CLIVE : You'll see. With Orientals, I adopt Oriental methods—I may not like it, but only fools are squeamish.

MASKELYNE (*after a thought*) : And is Admiral Watson in this?

[CLIVE's easy assurance gives way at once.]

CLIVE : Ah ! There you have me. Ask me to depose a Nawab, trick Omichand, defeat an army ten times the size of ours—yes, I will do it ; but ask me to fight the stupidity of Admiral Watson, and, by God, Edmund, I tremble !

MASKELYNE : But, Bob, all this goes beyond soldiering.

CLIVE (*slowly*) : Ye-es. We must be statesmen, Edmund. We play for an Empire.

[*His moment of grandeur changes.*]

I want you with me, Edmund. I'm alone in this—as ever. To-day we sign the great treaty with Jaffar.

MASKELYNE : To-day ? It is prepared—ready ?

CLIVE (*whispering*) : Yes—but it needs Admiral Watson's signature. The fate of this country is not in my hands, but in the hands of a dunder-headed old sailor, who can think of nothing but his wife and his own infidelities. I shall have to placate, soothe, flatter, the old man—but, sign he must, or Jaffar won't accept the treaty.

MASKELYNE : But Jaffar can't come to Calcutta. He can't leave Suraj ud Dowlah.

CLIVE (*grins at him*) : You think not ? Go to the corner of the bazaar. There will be a palanquin, with *closed curtains*. No one must be allowed to see who is inside—choose bearers you can trust and have it brought here.

MASKELYNE : A palanquin ? With closed curtains—who is it ?

[CLIVE smiles at MASKELYNE enigmatically.]

CLIVE : We'll see.

[MASKELYNE goes out.]

CLIVE, alert, rummages amongst his papers, and brings out two large documents—identical except that one is a red parchment and the other white—and looks at them.

While he is doing this, MARGARET is seen coming up the steps. She is in black. She carries a few white flowers in her hand.

CLIVE looks round, and sees her.

(Puzzled) Margaret? Church? To-day?

[She looks at him, and drops her eyes to the flowers. What is to-day? (He realises, and his voice softens) Of course! Two years ago to-day, the boy died.]

MARGARET : Yes. I'm putting these on the altar. Our son. Poor little Bob.

CLIVE (*very humbly*) : And I'd forgotten. There's been so much to do.

MARGARET : Yes. You are busy.

CLIVE : You will think I had forgotten him altogether.

MARGARET : No. I know you remember.

CLIVE : Remember? God, I remember. Our drive away in the carriage, when we had to leave him . . . I shan't forget that. I caught the look in your eyes—there was something there that I hoped never to see in any woman's face. It was near hatred.

MARGARET : Yes.

CLIVE : I was afraid of you for a time—yes, afraid. Later, thank God, it passed.

MARGARET : We came through—as we always do.

CLIVE : Poor little fellow !

MARGARET (*entreating*) : Bob, we must go to England—soon. Oh, I know what you'll say, but I have your promise—two years. (*Quietly*) I can't lose another child.

CLIVE : What ?

MARGARET : He shouldn't be in this country—he is ill now. Don't you see, Bob ? If he gets worse—if he—— I couldn't go through that again—not even for you.

CLIVE : I know—I know. Oh, God, the risks I run—you'd hate me, as you did before, if anything happened—and rightly. Just a little longer—a month.

MARGARET : A month ? (*She shakes her head.*)

CLIVE : I promise you.

MARGARET : Promise ?

[*He looks away.*]

Surely your work is done. They all say so.

[*He looks at her, and shakes his head slowly.*]

CLIVE (*after a hasty look round*) : Margaret, they're living in a fools' paradise.

MARGARET : There's danger—again ?

CLIVE : Yes. The crisis is coming. Give me leave to stay, Margaret. If I achieve this, my work is done.

[*She looks at him, and nods.*]

MARGARET : You know best, dear.

CLIVE (*suddenly very quiet*) : Margaret. Tell me. It may come one day, soon, that *I stand at a crossways*. To go on, and fail, may mean death to us all.

[*MARGARET starts.*]

If I were to go on and fail this time, the Black Hole would be repeated—it might even be worse—the Nawab has no mercy on man, woman, or child.

MARGARET : Oh !

CLIVE : And yet I may want to go on, if my work is to endure. So I ask you—would you give me leave to go on ?

MARGARET : Why do you ask me ?

CLIVE : Because, if I fail, it would mean—massacre—"man, woman, and child"—the Nawab has no mercy.

MARGARET : Bob !

CLIVE : Would you give me leave to go on—even then ?

MARGARET : I'm very simple, Bob, and I know very little ; but I know that a man like you will always do what he must.

[CLIVE *nods slowly. She understands him.*

(*Bracing herself for the question.*) Will it mean . . . war ?

CLIVE : My way, a quick campaign, one battle—perhaps a bloodless campaign.

MARGARET : And then ?

CLIVE : Everything you can wish for—home, peace, riches, glory, renown ; you will be a great lady in England—

MARGARET : Bob—as if I cared ! All I want is you, at home with the children—an estate, small if you like—but a home, and all that we have planned so long.

CLIVE : It shall be so.

MARGARET (*fingering the flowers in her hands*) : You can't come to the church with me now ?

CLIVE : I—I—God, why do I always have to fail you ? I take everything.

[*She shakes her head.*

MARGARET : You give, Bob. I ask no more.

[*She moves to go. He stops her, and says, very quietly, as he picks out some flowers from her hand :*

CLIVE : Put this on the altar for me ; that one for you ; and this—from both of us.

[*She goes out.*

Immediately CLIVE becomes alert again. He takes out, and holds up, the two parchments—the

*red and the white, which should be seen clearly—
and places them carefully on the table.*

*There is a knock at the door of the inner room.
A SERGEANT comes out, and speaks briskly.*

SERGEANT : The prisoner, sir, asks——

CLIVE : Prisoner be damned—he is my guest.

SERGEANT (*with a grin*) : My mistake, sir. He asks if he may drink.

CLIVE : Of course. Give him everything he wants.

SERGEANT : I have, sir—but—he asks if he has the great Sahib's word that he may drink—I think he means with safety, sir.

CLIVE : Tell him—on the word of a Sahib.

SERGEANT : That'll do for him, sir, thank you.

[SERGEANT goes in.]

MASKELYNE comes running up the steps. He looks round.

CLIVE (*quickly*) : The palanquin ?

MASKELYNE (*in a low voice*) : It's here. It's—JAFFAR !

[CLIVE grins at him.]

Shall it be brought in ?

CLIVE (*after a second*) : Yes. Wait. Walsh?—Where is Walsh ?

MASKELYNE : He is outside. (*Calls*) Walsh !

[WALSH comes up the steps hurriedly.]

CLIVE : Where's Admiral Watson ?

WALSH : He's in his quarters—writing, to catch the mail. I heard him speak of coming over to see you.

CLIVE : Send a man over to watch his house—if the Admiral shows any sign of coming here, warn me.

[WALSH goes out quickly.]

Stand by, Edmund—out there on the verandah—warn me if you see the Admiral. Quick.

[MASKELYNE nods and takes up his stand outside.
A gorgeous palanquin is brought in by bearers,
and is set down. The curtains remain closed.

CLIVE dismisses the bearers.

He mutters a word to the occupant of the palanquin.
JAFFAR, Suraj ud Dowlah's uncle, emerges.
JAFFAR is a big bearded fine-looking man. At the
moment he is very ill at ease. He salaams to CLIVE.
CLIVE and he greet each other formally.

*All the next scene is played with an undercurrent
of haste, of secrecy. CLIVE's one idea is to make
JAFFAR sign.*

JAFFAR : We shall be alone ?

CLIVE : You may rely upon it.

JAFFAR : It is well. A word of this meeting in
the ears of Suraj ud Dowlah, and (*nodding*)
whatever we arrange would soon cease to con-
cern me.

CLIVE : The treaty is here. Very brief. You
will be the new Nawab and rule over the
Provinces of Northern India.

JAFFAR : By the grace of Allah——

CLIVE : I, on my side, agree to march my army
of three thousand against Suraj ud Dowlah.
How many troops has he ?

JAFFAR : Sixty-thousand men, and twenty-
thousand horsemen.

CLIVE : As commander-in-chief of his army,
how many will follow you when you come over
to me ?

JAFFAR : I should say, perhaps half—more
possibly.

CLIVE : They'll follow you ?

JAFFAR : They will follow.

CLIVE : You swear to bring them to me as soon
as I send for them, and at the place I dictate ?

JAFFAR : Agreed. Where and when you will.

CLIVE : Good. (*Suavely*) Then you are prepared to sign the treaty ?

JAFFAR : But I'm afraid of one thing.

CLIVE : Afraid ? The great Jaffar afraid ?

JAFFAR : Afraid of Omichand. He has been conspiring with you, with me, and now he conspires with Suraj ud Dowlah himself. You can never tell which side he will take.

CLIVE : I know. He has demanded—for his services in negotiating this treaty between us—three hundred thousand pounds.

[JAFFAR is amazed.]

JAFFAR : Three hundred thousand !

CLIVE : And it is in the treaty . . . guaranteed by you—by us.

JAFFAR : By me ! But there is not so much money in the treasury.

CLIVE (*slowly*) : No, but Omichand will be paid in his own coin, and not in the coin of the realm.

JAFFAR : His own coin ?

CLIVE : As the treacherous scoundrel he is, (*Looking at JAFFAR*) There'll be two treaties between us, this one, the red treaty, the one that he sees (*he shows the treaty on red paper*), guarantees him the payment ; in the other, the real treaty (*he shows the treaty on white paper*), the payment clause does not appear.

[*This appeals to JAFFAR. His face is wreathed in smiles.*]

JAFFAR : I see. But Omichand is too clever. The treaty we show him must be signed.

CLIVE : It shall be signed.

JAFFAR : By Admiral Watson as well ? His signature is imperative.

CLIVE (*after a second*) : Yes. Let us sign first—time is short.

[CLIVE offers him the pen. JAFFAR draws back, doubtful.]

JAFFAR : So long as Omichand is in the Nawab's Palace, whispering in the Nawab's ear . . . I fear——

CLIVE (*urging him to sign*) : Omichand will reveal nothing—sign.

JAFFAR : No, no. He may be whispering to the Nawab at this minute.

CLIVE (*after a slight pause*) : Omichand is no longer with the Nawab—sign.

JAFFAR (*surprised*) : Impossible !

CLIVE : My agents told him Suraj ud Dowlah had heard of his dealings with me. Omichand was glad to escape. We helped him to escape. . . .

JAFFAR (*smiling*) : From a danger that never threatened him ? *Shabash !* That was clever, very clever. But Omichand will worm his way back to Suraj ud Dowlah—you will see.

CLIVE : He won't.

JAFFAR : No ?

CLIVE : Captain Maskelyne !

[MASKELYNE *comes in*. CLIVE *indicates the door*.

Bring in Omichand.

JAFFAR : Here ? The great Omichand lured here from the Nawab's Palace ? (*Stroking his beard*.) My countrymen are unwise to call the English fools.

CLIVE : We show *this* treaty to Omichand. (*Smiling at JAFFAR*.) We shall, of course, begin by telling him it's impossible to give him the money. We must not appear to give way too easily. We play him, Jaffar, we play him—like a fish.

JAFFAR (*comprehending*) : Of course, of course. I may be permitted to become angry—no ?

CLIVE : Certainly. I shall myself lose my temper, very heartily—you understand ?

JAFFAR : And then—— ?

CLIVE : We give way under pressure of his arguments.

JAFFAR : Excellent. . . .

CLIVE : S-sh !

[OMICHAND is shown in by MASKELYNE. He is an unpleasant-looking person—sleek, sly, and oily. They exchange greetings. MASKELYNE takes up his position on the verandah outside, and continues to watch anxiously for Admiral Watson.]

Omichand, I propose to deal with this matter in Western fashion and come to the point.

OMICHAND : Yes, yes. Time is precious. Well ?

CLIVE : Jaffar and myself are agreed in general principles——

OMICHAND : Excellent——

CLIVE : But there is one difficulty—one great difficulty.

OMICHAND (*smoothly*) : One that can be overcome, I hope ?

CLIVE : That will depend on you. This money that you demand.

OMICHAND : Three hundred thousand—yes.

JAFFAR : We can't pay it.

OMICHAND (*blandly*) : I am in your hands, but I cannot forgo the sum.

CLIVE : Yet all you have done is to bring about a meeting between myself and Jaffar.

OMICHAND (*smiling*) : It is a fair price for bringing two such great men together.

CLIVE : We can't pay it.

OMICHAND (*gravely*) : That is a pity. (*Slyly*) And Suraj ud Dowlah would be very angry if it came to his ears that his uncle, his commander-in-chief, were here arranging to depose him.

JAFFAR (*threatening*) : You mean that you will inform Suraj ud Dowlah ?

OMICHAND (*mildly persuasive*) : I mean nothing—but that you will be well advised to agree to this sum. After all, you obtain a throne and you

become the greatest ruler in India. . . . The British establish themselves for ever ; the French, Dutch and others will no longer exist ; and the country can look forward to years of peace and prosperity. It is cheap at three hundred thousand pounds.

CLIVE (*pretending great anger*) : But you've forgotten one thing. The treaty is arranged, and—we can do without you now.

OMICHAND : I am no longer any use—to you ? Well, perhaps to others.

JAFFAR (*standing over him*) : You also forget that you are far from the Nawab's Palace at the present moment.

OMICHAND (*smiling*) : Should by chance my body be found in the Ganges, or no news be had of me, my agent, who is an able man, will, in three days, acquaint Suraj ud Dowlah with the arrangements that are being made to depose him.

CLIVE : Scoundrel ! Then you are still treating with the Nawab ?

OMICHAND (*gently*) : You, gentlemen, are soldiers and see everything from one point of view ; but I am a mere merchant—and, like the gods, I must be on the winning side.

CLIVE (*as if he is obliged to give in*) : We are in his hands. Come, Jaffar, will you sign after me ? Sign.

[*They watch each other warily. It is the great moment. Then JAFFAR signs the red treaty. CLIVE signs.*]

(*Heartily*) There ! Now, Omichand, are you satisfied ?

OMICHAND (*interposing quietly, but insistently*) : And . . . Admiral Watson ?

CLIVE : He will sign.

OMICHAND : I would prefer to *see* his signature.

CLIVE (*angrily*) : Do you doubt me ?

OMICHAND : Oh, no, no, no ! We do not doubt for a moment—but still, at the same time, no treaty can be binding without the Admiral's signature.

CLIVE : Surely if Jaffar is satisfied——

[*But JAFFAR is suddenly cautious. He smiles into CLIVE's face.*]

JAFFAR : Ah ! I think Omichand is right, we should both prefer to see *Admiral Watson's* signature on *any* treaty. (*He means on the white treaty as well.*)

CLIVE (*caught*) : It shall be so.

OMICHAND : Quite. But *when* will it be there ? For, until then, I can hardly consider the matter concluded. And my presence near Suraj ud Dowlah is necessary at once—otherwise, my agent—a good fellow but rather stupid—might carry out my instructions and inform the Nawab . . . you understand the urgency ?

[*MASKELYNE from the verandah, attracts CLIVE's attention with the warning.*]

MASKELYNE : Admiral Watson.

CLIVE (*hurriedly*) : The treaty, with Admiral Watson's signature on it, will be in your hands in a few minutes.

OMICHAND : Otherwise . . .

CLIVE (*to OMICHAND*) : Wait in there. Admiral Watson must not see you.

[*OMICHAND goes slowly into the inner room, while CLIVE fumes with impatience to get him out.*]

CLIVE (*to JAFFAR*) : Quick ! Sign the white treaty with me.

[*JAFFAR signs leisurely, and CLIVE follows quickly.*]

CLIVE and MASKELYNE are in agony that the Admiral will arrive, but JAFFAR takes his time getting into the palanquin. He gets in and whispers to CLIVE.

JAFFAR : I take it that the Admiral's signature will be upon the white treaty as well ?

CLIVE : Of course—of course.

JAFFAR : *Otherwise . . .* I cannot regard the treaty as binding.

[His head disappears behind the curtains.]

CLIVE (to MASKELYNE) : The bearers—quick.

[MASKELYNE gives a sharp order, and the bearers appear.]

[In a low voice] The treaty will be with you in an hour.

[He gives the order to the bearers. The palanquin is taken off.]

Edmund ! *(He puts his hands on his shoulders)*
Some water, for God's sake !

[MASKELYNE gets it for him. CLIVE is at high nervous tension. He drinks and puts the glass down.]

With Omichand pacified—with Jaffar's army—I shall succeed. Only this admiral—this blundering elephant of a man—remains. I must keep my temper with him. I must—I must.

[The Admiral's voice is heard off. CLIVE assumes a special attitude that he will adopt to bamboozle the Admiral.]

Presently, ADMIRAL WATSON, a rhinoceros of a man, with long arms and a growling disposition, charges in. CLIVE advances with overwhelming cordiality.

Ah, Admiral—glad to see you.

WATSON (*glowering*) : I saw a palanquin leave here. Closed curtains. Who was it ?

CLIVE (*charmingly*) : My dear Admiral, a sailor, of all men, should know better than to ask such questions.

WATSON : Woman, I suppose. You'll get yourself into trouble.

CLIVE : We all do.

[WATSON agrees, and then disagrees hastily.]

A glass of wine ?

WATSON : You're too damned polite. I suppose you want something ?

CLIVE (*easily*) : No, no. Everything is very quiet. There is, of course, the treaty, which we might discuss at your leisure.

[*He offers him a drink. WATSON takes it, glares at it, and drinks, as if to show that he is not to be placated all the same. CLIVE fingers the white treaty thoughtfully.*]

WATSON (*loudly*) : Look here. I've made up my mind.

CLIVE (*sweetly*) : Yes, Admiral ?

WATSON : " Yes Admiral " —what's the matter with you to-day ? I said I'd made up my mind about this treaty. It won't do.

CLIVE : Now, now, Watson. We've quarrelled already about this——

WATSON : And I intend to again.

CLIVE : Don't think because I quarrel with you, I don't appreciate your point of view. I grant you that I am sometimes impetuous—head-strong—you've said so yourself——

WATSON : I have, and I meant it.

CLIVE : And naturally—though I often resent it—foolishly perhaps—in my heart I admire your plain blunt, common sense, and I realise the value of your restraining influence.

WATSON : Hum ! You're too damned agreeable to-day. Quarrelled with your wife, or what ?

CLIVE (*laughing to please him*) : What a wit you have when you like, Admiral. No, no, no ! For once, let's set aside personal differences—let's see if we can't, by a bold stroke, effect something permanent—something enduring—before we retire. Now this treaty——

WATSON : I was wondering when you were coming to that. I won't sign it. Let the Council decide.

CLIVE : Now, Admiral, do you think a project as big as this should go beyond our two selves ? Are they men of your understanding—can I trust their very good sense like I can yours ?

[WATSON is nearly taken in, and then thunders.

WATSON : You want me to sign so that you can go ballywhooing all over India, and share the responsibility with me if it goes wrong. You want to bamboozle me into pulling your chestnuts out of the fire. Damned if I put my head in a noose. I won't sign. (*He makes a movement to go.*)

CLIVE : It's a pity. In the treaty, Jaffar promises you, personally, a gift of forty thousand pounds.

WATSON : Eh ?

CLIVE : Forty thousand—pounds.

WATSON : H'm !

CLIVE : Not that that would make any difference to your decision, of course.

WATSON : No. (*Shaken, he returns to the table.*) This is a very momentous decision—do you realise that ?

CLIVE : (*humbly*) : I agree with you, Admiral.

WATSON : Is the clause you spoke of inserted in the treaty ?

CLIVE : Yes, it's here.

WATSON : Let me see. (*He reads closely.*)

CLIVE : Don't you trust me ?

WATSON : Eh ? Yes. But I'll look, all the same. Yes, I see. Well, if it is in the interest of the country——

[*He signs.*

CLIVE : Ah ! I am glad. Now, now, don't go, Watson. There is just one other little point. I mentioned to you a second treaty. (*He brings out the red treaty.*)

WATSON : Eh ?

CLIVE : In this treaty, I have put in Omichand's preposterous demand for money.

WATSON : You expect me to sign that too?
CLIVE : Only to outwit Omichand.

WATSON : He's a damned treacherous, cunning scoundrel. He'd sell his own mother, *has* done so, I expect—but I won't sign that.

CLIVE (*keeps his temper with an effort—hurt*) : It's merely a formality, Admiral.

WATSON : Formality be damned, sir. It's well enough for you to play these tricks, but, damn it, *I* won't.

CLIVE (*drily*) : You don't mind signing anything which benefits you to the extent of forty thousand pounds, but when it comes to a little intrigue to get rid of a pestilential fellow, who can ruin the whole enterprise, you refuse.

WATSON : I don't like it.

CLIVE : Neither do I, but—there are bigger issues at stake.

WATSON : No. My—my conscience will not allow me.

CLIVE (*keeping his temper*) : Watson—I ask you to consider—if you don't sign, the whole scheme may fall through.

WATSON : That's right, throw it all on me.

CLIVE : But, my dear Admiral, what is the use of signing one treaty if you cancel it by not signing the other?

WATSON : Damn it, sir, can't I trust my own conscience?

CLIVE : Conscience?

WATSON : Yes, sir, conscience—I doubt you know the meaning of the word. It is well enough for an upstart like you to play these tricks—but not for me, sir. Not for me. I'll have nothing more to do with it.

[*He stumps off, leaving CLIVE still holding the pen. MASKELYNE and WALSH come in hurriedly.*]

MASKELYNE : He has refused?

[CLIVE *nods*.]

WALSH : Then the whole thing falls through ?

MASKELYNE : Omichand will inform Suraj ud Dowlah in three days. It is the end.

[CLIVE remains standing. He looks from one to the other, and at their gloomy faces. Then he begins to grin the grin of a buccaneer. He chuckles. The others look at him in amazement.

CLIVE : No, my God, sir, this shall go through.

WALSH : How ?

[CLIVE's hand has been grasping the pen in his clenched fist. He opens his hand, and looks at the pen. He looks sideways at MASKELYNE, and slowly turns his eyes to the ink-well. With a slow gesture, he dips the pen—flourishes it, holds it poised in the air, enjoying their bewilderment, and then, with a sweep of his arm, makes a slow firm signature on the paper, saying—"Charles—Watson." The others are aghast.

MASKELYNE : The Admiral's signature.

WALSH : But it'll be discovered later !

CLIVE : When Suraj ud Dowlah is deposed—victory is with us and India is on its feet—who will care ? Admiral Watson will then be the first to acknowledge the signature. Show this to Omichand.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

One month later.

It is the interior of a large mud shelter overlooking the River Bhagirathi, a tributary of the Ganges at Kutwa. Across the river is a village called Plassey. The river at this period of the year would be about three hundred feet across. The rains are due. The heat is stifling. In addition to the little army which

is already encamped, there are numerous camp followers—native sellers, nautch-girls who have come with the troops. The native sellers of all kinds besiege the troops, and even approach the officers.

When we first see the hut, we see only a view of the river—soldiers passing ; we hear a bit of a row in the distance—a bellowing sergeant—and comparative quiet.

We then notice the group in the hut. They are not soldiers. They are members of the Council, and they are very perturbed.

MAJOR KILPATRICK and CAPTAIN JOHNSTONE are present. KILPATRICK is an officer who was always jealous of Clive's success. JOHNSTONE is no friend either.

Oil lamps give a certain light. The punkah-wallah is kicked into doing his job at odd intervals.

The group of councillors consists of MANNING, PEMBERTON, and KENT. Together with MAJOR KILPATRICK and CAPTAIN JOHNSTONE (who are regular soldiers), they represent a solid body of opinion that Clive's march must go no further. But they are afraid to tell him so directly, and they await the Governor.

MANNING walks up and down haranguing his own cronies before they attack Clive.

MANNING : You see, Pemberton ? You see the line to take ? Until the Governor comes we must argue, persuade, show reason——

PEMBERTON : And, God knows, we have it on our side . . .

MANNING : Hint—suggest—that's all. The Governor will carry the authority. (*So much for his group. Now he turns for assistance to the regular officers.*) Major Kilpatrick. You agree that to continue this march in the face of Jaffar's obvious treachery is madness ?

KILPATRICK : I do. But I doubt if Colonel Clive will see reason.

MANNING : And you, Captain Johnstone ?

JOHNSTONE (*in his "heavy-weather" manner*) : Oh, I think the fellow's mad ; but, then, I always did. His luck can't hold for ever. Here we are stuck up against the bank of the river, and God knows what is opposite.

PEMBERTON : And the monsoon about to break at any minute.

MANNING : Ah—I'm glad you reminded me ; that's a good point.

JOHNSTONE : Once on the other side, and the river in flood behind us, they could annihilate us.

[MANNING surveys officers and civilians.

MANNING : Then we are agreed ? We are ready for him ?

PEMBERTON : Yes. Where is he ?

JOHNSTONE : Oh, staring across the river as usual. (*They look at him in surprise.*) Been there all the afternoon—staring as if he could see something beyond. . . .

MANNING : Is there anything to see ?

JOHNSTONE : I can't see anything—except mud and the other side. Perhaps he likes the smell of the mango grove opposite.

[*There is a hubbub in the distance—shouts—wailings of the women—sharp orders and quiet.*

CLIVE strides in, SERGEANT CLARK at his heels.

CLIVE is now a Commander, and all his orders are given quietly, authoritatively.

CLIVE (*continuing to the sergeant*) : See to it, Sergeant—tell the native sellers to keep away from the river bank. No one is to cross without my knowledge.

[*He nods to the others. He is studying a sheaf of notes, but continues to give his orders in a monotone, as if they were second nature.*

Major Kilpatrick, the rafts are not complete yet. I've ordered additional men down. The rafts must be ready to-night.

KILPATRICK (*a little insolently*) : You expect to use rafts ?

CLIVE (*without looking up*) : I expect my orders to be obeyed.

[KILPATRICK *glances at the Council, shrugs, and goes out.*

Johnstone, is the right bank patrolled ?

JOHNSTONE : I gave the orders, sir.

CLIVE : Well, see they've been carried out—that's more to the point. Send a few men into the mango grove opposite—at once, please.

[JOHNSTONE *shrugs his shoulders and goes out.*
(*He continues to read : the Council are getting a little fidgety.*) Well, gentlemen, it was good of you to come all this way for the pleasure of my company.

[*He continues to study. The others conspire together and MANNING goes forward to the attack.*

MANNING : We should like your opinion on the situation.

CLIVE (*without looking up*) : Damned bad.

MANNING (*insinuatingly*) : Jaffar has not kept his promises ?

[*No reply from CLIVE.*

(*At CLIVE, but speaking to the others*) Do you know that five times he has promised to leave Suraj ud Dowlah and come over to us ?

KENT (*playing up*) : Yes, yes ; and each time he has failed he has promised to join us at a place thirty miles further away——

MANNING : Yes, further and further away from Calcutta.

[*They look at each other, but CLIVE takes no notice.*

PEMBERTON : They say he is still with Suraj ud Dowlah's army at Plassey—just across the river.

MANNING : Yes, sixty thousand troops and twenty thousand cavalry, so I have heard.

[*They nudge MANNING to go on.*

It would, of course, be madness to take our little army across . . .

PEMBERTON : Oh, our commander is much too skilful to be caught like that.

CLIVE : Gentlemen, from what I can gather, you don't seem anxious for me to cross the river. (*Breaking out*) God's death, gentlemen, why don't you say what you mean ?

[*There is an uncomfortable silence.*

Then shall I complete the picture for you ? You seem well informed about Suraj ud Dowlah's army. Well, I have one good regiment, the Thirty-ninth Foot ; in all, eight hundred white troops, one hundred half-castes, and the rest Indian troops.

MANNING : And you still intend to cross ?

CLIVE (*abruptly*) : I must be ready. If it is any satisfaction to you, gentlemen, I can give you a very good prophecy. You ask me what the situation is. It is this : you will either die rich or die very quickly.

[*They begin to get angry.*

PEMBERTON (*rising*) : You have no right to take this responsibility.

MANNING : You promised us a bloodless campaign.

KENT : Yes, the Nawab was to be deposed without a shot.

MANNING (*with finality*) : I tell you, sir, the Council will not support you.

CLIVE : Did it ever ? (*He walks away.*)

MANNING (*after a pause*) : Gentlemen, it is not for us to speak. (*To CLIVE*) The Governor will be here, and he alone has authority.

CLIVE : Then what in God's name do you mean by wasting my time ? Walsh !

[*WALSH comes forward.*

These gentlemen have expressed a desire to see round the camp. Look after them . . . (*in his ear*) and lose them if you can.

[WALSH and Council go out.

CLIVE *strides away, muttering* : "Busybodies—they give me the belly-ache."

MASKELYNE *comes in*.

MASKELYNE : His Excellency has just arrived.

CLIVE : Good. Is he being brought here ?

MASKELYNE : Yes.

CLIVE : No message from Jaffar ?

MASKELYNE : No.

CLIVE (*walking up and down*) : Jaffar—Jaffar—

MASKELYNE : You can't trust him.

CLIVE : Who can trust any Oriental ? But I thought I could trust his greed for the throne. (*Sharply*) Sergeant !

[SERGEANT CLARK *comes in*.

CLARK : Yes, sir.

CLIVE : You are certain no boat—raft—anything has crossed the river to-day ?

CLARK : Sentries report nothing, sir, except one . . .

CLIVE : Except one. Good God, isn't that enough ?

CLARK : A sentry thought he saw something crossing far down the river, sir, early this morning.

CLIVE : Get hold of the man. Question him again.

[SERGEANT CLARK *goes*.

Jaffar—Jaffar. Is he greedy enough—covetous enough . . .

[WALSH and JOHNSTONE *come in with the GOVERNOR. He is elderly and impressive—a man of the world—and with him CLIVE takes a different*

tone to that he used with the others. They greet each other.

GOVERNOR : I have a letter from Mrs. Clive.

[*He gives it to CLIVE, who looks at it and does not open it.*

I take it things are not very satisfactory ?

CLIVE (*shortly*) : Far from it.

GOVERNOR (*feeling his way*) : You are not, I take it, proposing to cross the river ?

CLIVE : I am.

GOVERNOR (*guarded*) : Oh. (*Suavely*) Perhaps you'd outline your plans to me ?

CLIVE : You think my army incapable of attacking ?

GOVERNOR (*evasively*) : Tell me your plans.

[*With a look at the others, CLIVE draws them round the table : MASKELYNE and WALSH on the left, the GOVERNOR on the right, JOHNSTONE behind.*

CLIVE : Suraj ud Dowlah's army is drawn up at Plassey in the form of a rough semicircle—like this.

GOVERNOR : Some sixty thousand in all, I hear.

CLIVE : But there is only one absolutely loyal general—Mir Murdeen. He occupies the extreme right flank.

GOVERNOR : I see. And Jaffar's army ?

CLIVE : He is on the left—furthest away from me. Suraj ud Dowlah is in the centre.

GOVERNOR : I see. You will advance towards Jaffar first ?

CLIVE : No.

GOVERNOR : You will go straight for Suraj ud Dowlah ?

CLIVE : No. If we strike at the heart of the enemy the waverers are won. We strike at Mir Murdeen himself—our full force, every available man, every gun we have.

GOVERNOR : But—Mir Murdeen's army alone is four times yours.

[CLIVE *looks up with a grin of cunning.*

CLIVE : Yes, if we meet it front to front. Maskelyne here will act as the skeleton army and hold the whole of our front. But I and every fit man will march by night—a swift forced march. We come upon the extreme right flank of Mir Murdeen—where he can but use *one quarter* of his force. (*Slowly*) So we meet at equal odds after all.

MASKELYNE : As usual.

CLIVE : We go round to the back door, Sir—the enemy's back door.

GOVERNOR : But all this, of course, depends upon whether a message comes from Jaffar?

CLIVE : Yes.

GOVERNOR : And there is none?

CLIVE : So far.

[*There is a wailing cry of an Indian woman off, a mango-seller. CLIVE pricks up his ears. The wailing continues.*

Who is that? Sergeant!

[SERGEANT CLARK *appears.*

Who is that?

CLARK : Nothing, sir. Only an old woman selling mangoes. Been round all the afternoon. She won't go away.

[CLIVE *catches at the word.*

CLIVE : Mangoes? Buy the fruit. Then watch her to see which way she goes. She may be a spy.

CLARK : Yes, sir. (*He hesitates.*) But it's queer.

CLIVE : What is queer?

CLARK : The old woman won't sell.

CLIVE : Eh?

CLARK : She wants to have the honour of selling it to the great Sahib himself.

MASKELYNE : Don't touch it, Bob. It may be poisoned.

CLIVE : Oho ! Bring her in.

[The old WOMAN is brought in. She salaams, saying, "Huzoor." She carries the fruit-basket on her head, and now puts it on the ground.]

Kanh say ayah ? Where do you come from ?

[WOMAN points across the river.]

I'll buy it all.

[She stoops to the basket, and apparently carelessly takes out a pair of heavy Indian slippers as she picks over the fruit.]

And are these slippers for sale ?

WOMAN *(after a look round)* : For the great Sahib.

CLIVE : Give them to me. *(To SERGEANT CLARK)* Pay her well.

[The old WOMAN goes out. CLIVE bends the shoes backwards and forwards. He selects one, calls for a knife, and slits the soles of the shoe. There is a message inside.]

From Jaffar ! *(He reads)* "Cross the river. I will join you at Plassey with thirty thousand troops if I can"—"if I can." "Suraj ud Dowlah suspects. I dare not move yet. Cross the river—attack—and when I can I will join you." "When I can."

GOVERNOR : Exactly ! A trap.

CLIVE *(thinking)* : He asks me to cross the river . . .

GOVERNOR : The monsoon is about to break. It will be madness. Once it comes, the swollen river will be behind you and you will be trapped.

CLIVE : Yes, yes, yes.

GOVERNOR : May I have a word with you alone, please ?

[CLIVE nods. The others go.]

Colonel Clive, I regret I'll have to say this.

I myself appreciate your efforts—you have made a magnificent effort—but you must not cross the river.

CLIVE : I am in command here.

GOVERNOR : Of the army. But my authority is higher.

CLIVE : You mean . . .

GOVERNOR : I mean this. If you go on, you go alone, with every man's hand against you. If you continue in defiance of my authority, you will have the blood of every man—and woman—on your head. I want you to understand that.

CLIVE : I didn't expect this. It is well enough for those fools of the Council to talk, but surely you will see . . .

GOVERNOR : No. Once the rains come, you will have a roaring flood at your back—escape will be impossible. Yes, yes, you will be brave ; if you are defeated you'll die—yes—but, if you fail, our population will be massacred—Suraj ud Dowlah's victory will mean, not one Black Hole, but many. You are gambling with the lives of us all. (*Pointing to MARGARET's letter*) Even with those of your own wife and child.

CLIVE : By God, sir, do you think I don't know that ? Tell me this—have I ever failed ?

GOVERNOR : I can't agree to that as an argument. But I'll do this : the monsoon may not break for two days yet. Send a last message to Jaffar. Tell him he must come to you before the rains or the treaty is wiped out.

CLIVE (*shaking his head*) : He is watched. The moment he moves they will be upon him.

GOVERNOR : That is my last word.

[*They face each other.*]

I shall be returning at once. Perhaps you would like to send a message or letter to your wife ?

CLIVE : I've no time to write, but tell her, if you will, *I stand at the crossways.*

GOVERNOR (*repeating*) : " I stand at the cross-ways."

CLIVE : She'll know what I mean—and that I think of her.

GOVERNOR : I'll give her the message myself. Good night.

[*He goes out.*]

CLIVE (*calling*) : Walsh—Walsh ! (*To sergeant outside*) Call Captain Maskelyne too, please.

[*WALSH comes in. CLIVE speaks in a dead voice, as if it were only force of circumstances that made him give the order.*]

Send a last message to Jaffar—urge him, tell him I will go no further. He must come to me here—at once—or the treaty is wiped out.

[*MASKELYNE comes in.*]

WALSH : And our arrangements to cross ? Do we cancel them ?

CLIVE (*after a pause*) : Not yet—let the rafts be ready. The rains may hold off—one must go on—on to the stroke of the clock—before admitting failure.

[*WALSH goes, and CLIVE is left alone with MASKELYNE.*]

(*To MASKELYNE*) They're all against me, it seems.

MASKELYNE : I'm afraid so, Bob.

CLIVE : Edmund, I am once again that little clerk who used to ask your advice as a friend. I depend upon you. Tell me.

MASKELYNE : It's hard to say it, but aren't we venturing too much ? It would be a great stroke—if it succeeded. But you have Margaret—she has suffered so much already—and if you failed—

CLIVE : I understand, Edmund. Before, I've always had you with me—but this time I'm really alone. It's wrong, Edmund, wrong ; I shouldn't have to bear this alone. I've lost my

courage. I'm listening to reason—to caution ; I'm holding back when every instinct tells me to go on—go on. India is in my hands. (*Pointing to the river*) There—there is the way, if I dared to take it.

MASKELYNE : Still——

CLIVE (*giving up*) : Yes, you're right. It's too much to bear alone. (*In a low voice*) Edmund, give orders to recall the men from the river. (*He sinks down.*) . . . And so it ends. I've no courage—courage.

[MASKELYNE, *after a look out, goes out.* CLIVE, *with a gesture, stands facing the river, his hands clenched, muttering* : “ ‘ Courage ’—if there was one single helping hand.” *He thinks of MARGARET's letter and crosses to where it lies on his table. He looks at the letter. He opens it, and we hear only fragments of the contents.*

“ . . . Bob, they say you are in great danger—they hint terrible things to me here.” (*Suddenly he stiffens as he reads on*) “ Notwithstanding all they say, Bob—do what you must—if you believe it, I will abide by it—and I pray for your success, my dear, my dear.” By God ! that woman stands head and shoulders above us all.

[*Outside, there are sounds of orders being given and of movement. It has been growing darker slowly.*

CLIVE *walks up and down in a fever, with MARGARET's letter in his hand. He sinks down.*

There is a pause. Then there is a rushing sound of a great wind beginning, and it grows darker and darker.

MASKELYNE *comes running in.*

MASKELYNE : Bob ! Bob ! The monsoon ! It is breaking—listen ! Rain !

CLIVE : Rain !

MASKELYNE : Before Jaffar can reply, the river will be impassable.

CLIVE (*his last hope gone*) : Rain ! (*Sharply*) See that the orders are carried out by the troops—get them under cover—see that they use the tarpaulins, for God's sake, and keep the powder dry.

[MASKELYNE goes off.

The rain begins to beat down. CLIVE is alone.

Rain ! Rain ! And I could have India in my hands if . . . (*He looks at his hand, and sees in it the letter from MARGARET.*) Give me leave . . . to do what I must.

[*He holds his head in his hands, grasping the letter. He makes his decision. He calls loudly, but remains staring ahead.*

Walsh ! Maskelyne ! (WALSH and MASKELYNE and JOHNSTONE appear hastily.) Cancel the orders ! Recall the messenger ! Strike tents and march ! We cross the river to-night. Sergeant, rouse them up ! Sound the "Stand to Arms."

MASKELYNE : Sir . . . ?

[CLIVE moves up to the entrance driving the others in front of him.

CLIVE : Cross, I say. . . . Johnstone, get your guns out now, before the flood comes. March light—no baggage. Speed. Speed.

[WALSH and JOHNSTONE go out quickly.

MASKELYNE : You mean . . . ?

CLIVE : To the rafts. My orders stand—we cross !

[*In the distance the drums begin to beat, the noise of men, of the jingle of arms, and of the wind and the rain, increase in force. The lightning plays at the hut entrance as CLIVE stands facing the driving rain.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I

Walcot. Clive's country home. Seven years later (1764).

The scene is the sitting-room that Margaret has earmarked for their own private use. It is a pleasant room overlooking the terrace. It is spring.

The situation in the house is that, at long last, Margaret has really got her husband at home. They are to settle down—adventuring is over. All her life she has been waiting for him to keep his promise and give her the home that they have often spoken of and often planned, but always some new task has had to be undertaken, and it has been put off and put off. Now, at last, she feels she really has got him home—and she is happy. CLIVE himself is content. He has been ill—but he is amused at the moment by planning an estate so extensive that, if he buys much more land, his borders will reach London—a hundred miles away.

All we see at the moment, when the curtain rises, is a housekeeper, MRS. CLIFFORD, drumming impatiently on the table with her fingers, and looking as if an outburst of temper or hysteria is imminent. With her is BETTY, a slow-speaking country maid with a strong and pleasant country accent.

MRS. CLIFFORD : It's no use my giving you instructions, Betty, ask my Lady Clive. . . .

BETTY : But she ask me to ask you, Mrs. Clifford. . . .

MRS. CLIFFORD : What's the use when everything I say is contradicted, and everything I do is changed. . . .

BETTY : Oh, Mrs. Clifford—'tis just her way—she is like a young girl with her first home. Why, they do say she looks ten years younger since she came down to Walcot—you'd never think she was a middle-aged woman of thirty.

[Old George, a farm bailiff, appears at the windows. He is completely bewildered, and very agitated.]

What is it, George ?

GEORGE : Be the master here ?

BETTY : What do you want with him, George ?

GEORGE : I want to ax him—danged if I know what I want to ax him, now. 'Tis so many things he do say, and so many orders he give—'tis ten men's job to mind them.

BETTY : New masters, George, new ways.

GEORGE : Ay—he may be my Lord Clive of Plassey—he may know summat about this 'ere India—but he don't know nothing about this 'ere estate. . . .

BETTY : He knows enough to get some work out of you at last, George.

GEORGE : Ay, but he wants everything so quick—he seem to think that, now he's master here, the sheep can grow two coats a year, and trees and avenues spring up in the night. Nature's agin it—and I up and says so.

BETTY (*awed*) : You did ? What did my Lord Clive say ?

GEORGE : Nowt. He weren't there when I said it.

[MARGARET comes in—she is busy, and happily worried over household affairs. She sees at once that CLIVE's chair is empty and the shawl on the ground.]

MARGARET : There ! Where is Lord Clive ? Find him, George—ask him to come here—he shouldn't be out—take his wrap to him—I'm sure he is not wearing his thick vest.

[GEORGE takes the wrap, and goes off.]

MARGARET *calls after him* :

And see that he actually puts it on.

[MARGARET turns to MRS. CLIFFORD, and is

once again the complete happy housewife. All the following little items are stressed as if they were the most important things in the world.

Mrs. Clifford—I found a much better place for the linen—of course, the cupboard over the stairs! Take these, Betty, and tell Mary she must be more careful with the silk shirts—the iron was too hot. Oh, and, Betty, have a look at baby—the cat has a habit of jumping on his cot . . . Martha must be more careful—the poor mite would be suffocated. . . I'm always terrified of that. Oh, and the apple store wants picking over—I've been up there myself. Oh, and tell Mary, no, I'll tell her myself. . . . *(She puts several things on the table, and takes out a notebook as she says, without looking up)* What are you doing, Mrs. Clifford—surely this isn't a time for sitting down?

MRS. CLIFFORD : There is nothing for me to do, my lady. . . .

[MARGARET *looks up, surprised.*

I can see your ladyship has no further need of my services. . . .

MARGARET : Mrs. Clifford?

MRS. CLIFFORD : I can make arrangements to leave as soon as convenient.

MARGARET (*firing up a little*) : To leave? Very well—if you wish it. I want no unhappy people here.

[MRS. CLIFFORD, *with a stiff curtsey, is sweeping out, when MARGARET suddenly repents, and goes to her impulsively.*

Mrs. Clifford . . .

[MRS. CLIFFORD *stops.*

Come, if I'm exacting, if I interfere, you must forgive me.

MRS. CLIFFORD (*non-committally*) : My lady.

MARGARET (*simply*) : It's such a joy to be planning a home that is at last to be a home. I love

it all so—I want to do everything myself—you must bear with me.

MRS. CLIFFORD (*overcome*) : I—I—my lady—I'll do anything—anything for you—but you will wear yourself out. . . .

MARGARET (*quietly*) : This will never wear me out. Dear Mrs. Clifford, how could you be so cross with me ?

MRS. CLIFFORD (*sniffing audibly*) : I only felt—I was no longer wanted.

MARGARET : Not wanted ? Why, how could I do without you ?

[MRS. CLIFFORD *is quite overcome at this, and mops her eyes.*

Listen, I'll let you into a secret—I'm going to re-plan this room entirely . . .

MRS. CLIFFORD (*from her handkerchief*) : The one room we really *have* got straight ?

MARGARET (*eagerly*) : Yes, yes—but listen, we'll plan it together. This room will be for Lord Clive and myself . . . a little room all to ourselves . . . and I want *you* to arrange for all the furniture from our old room in Queen's Square to come here.

MRS. CLIFFORD : My lady ? What, all that old stuff ?

MARGARET : Yes. There're some things one always loves best—the first—the things of one's youth. No one knows about this—not even my husband. It's to be a surprise. Will you help me ? I'm forgiven ?

[MRS. CLIFFORD *nods, and smiles through her tears.*

MRS. CLIFFORD : My lady.

MARGARET : There. (*She kisses her to console her.*) No one must be unhappy here.

[MRS. CLIFFORD *goes.*

MARGARET, *now happy again, goes about the*

room doing the little jobs that every woman can find to do. She picks over her work-box—there are baby's clothes to see to—the footstool to be adjusted ready for my lord. She is singing as she hears CLIVE's voice outside the window.

CLIVE comes in with the SURVEYOR. Even though he is now retired, and is on his country estate, CLIVE still retains the manner of planning a campaign, and talks to the SURVEYOR as if he were a chief staff officer. His clothes, however, are easy and comfortable. OLD GEORGE is doing his best to keep the wrap round his master's shoulders, but CLIVE takes no notice, and throws his shoulders back, and the wrap keeps falling off.

CLIVE : Then you'll see to it ? At once. You people in the country are too slow for me—two thousand acres—oh, they'll sell. Plans for the new outhouses by to-morrow ?

[The SURVEYOR is taken aback.

Well, Thursday then—get it done.

[GEORGE puts shawl round CLIVE, who pushes it off, and says, " Don't do that ! "

He suddenly notices MARGARET, and feels guilty, and rather like a naughty schoolboy.

MARGARET comes up to him ; takes the wrap from GEORGE, who is still trying to keep it on his master's shoulders ; dismisses the SURVEYOR and GEORGE with a nod. They withdraw. MARGARET stands looking at CLIVE.

MARGARET (as she puts her hand to his collar to feel what he is wearing) : You're not wearing your thick vest. . . .

CLIVE (humbly) : My dear—the sun.

MARGARET : The air's still cold—no coat—no wrap—and this morning I left you looking like a sick baby.

[MARGARET leads him gently to the chair, sits him down, wraps the shawl round him, puts his feet on the stool, and converts him into the complete invalid. CLIVE suffers this.

I'll get the compress for your head.

CLIVE : No, not that—your hands, if you like. I'm tired of the compress, and with being an invalid.

[She puts her hands on his forehead—he relaxes at once, with a thankful sigh. There is a pause while her fingers massage his forehead.]

(Looking up at her) You like to have me at your mercy, don't you ?

MARGARET : Bob.

CLIVE : Well, you have your wish—here I am—on the shelf—

MARGARET : Bob !

CLIVE *(as she eases his cushions, he sinks back)* : Well, if I'm to be a cabbage—I'll be a comfortable cabbage.

[He is now the complete invalid. MARGARET draws the stool to his feet, as if it were a constant habit, and sits beside him. They look a comfortable middle-aged pair of married people. CLIVE looks down at her, and makes a familiar gesture of laying his hand on her shoulder. But suddenly his eyes begin to roam, and a cunning look comes into them.]

(Very innocently) Where's Walsh ?

MARGARET : My dear, you know, he went to London two days ago.

CLIVE : Oh, yes—yes. . . . *(He looks to see if his little hypocrisy has been successful.)*

MARGARET : *Why* did he go ?

CLIVE *(still very innocently)* : Some business of his own—a woman, perhaps.

MARGARET *(seeing through this)* : Bob—did you send him ?

CLIVE : Me ? Send him ? Why should I ?

MARGARET : You are not still hankering after—news ?

CLIVE *(still all innocence)* : News ?

MARGARET (*with a catch in her breath*): Of London—of India—

CLIVE: Why do you dislike that word?

MARGARET: Please God I never hear it again!

CLIVE (*grimly*): It's likely to crop up in the news, I understand. . . .

MARGARET (*quickly*): Understand—from whom?

CLIVE: Eh? Oh, just talk.

MARGARET (*looks at him searchingly, and then turns away*): We've done with all that, haven't we? Haven't we, Bob?

CLIVE (*agreeing quickly*): Yes, my dear, yes. Let India look after itself—let Sullivan run the Company—and that young pup Burgoyne—let them all go hang—India has had the best years of my life. . . .

[MARGARET stops him.]

MARGARET: No. The best years are to come.

CLIVE: To come? But we are old—I'm thirty-eight.

MARGARET (*thoughtfully*): To me all that we have striven for has been so that one day we shall have—this. You have achieved everything a man can—wealth, honour, a nation's gratitude—surely, then, the best years are to come.

CLIVE (*touched*): It's a woman's point of view.

MARGARET: And the man?

CLIVE: Will do what he can.

[CLIVE pats her hand.]

BETTY comes in, and announces: "Mr. Wedderburn and Captain George." MARGARET is at once alarmed at this intrusion.

MARGARET: Wedderburn?

[MARGARET looks at CLIVE, who, in turn, looks extremely innocent.]

CLIVE: My dear, just callers—a pity, of course. . . .

MARGARET : Who is this Captain George ?

CLIVE (*with a shrug*) : Some young fellow seeking preferment. Come, come, welcome them. . . .
(*To BETTY*) Show them in.

[*BETTY goes out.*]

MARGARET *looks at CLIVE searchingly.*

My dear—what is it ?

MARGARET : They're from London—they bring news—I see, always, India in the background. . . .

CLIVE : Nonsense—Wedderburn, an old friend, on his way to his brother's estate. . . .

BETTY : Mr. Wedderburn and Captain George.

[*They come in. CAPTAIN GEORGE is a pleasant plump young fellow—very ill at ease at the moment, and very deferential to CLIVE. MARGARET looks at them, obviously a little hostile. She prevents CLIVE from rising. They greet. MR. WEDDERBURN presents CAPTAIN GEORGE to MARGARET and to CLIVE.*]

MARGARET (*looking at him*) : Captain George ? You're sunburnt, sir. You come, perhaps, from—India ?

CAPTAIN GEORGE (*awkwardly*) : Yes, yes—I've been out there.

MARGARET (*deliberately*) : And when did you get back ?

CAPTAIN GEORGE (*fencing*) : Er—recently——

MARGARET : Very recently ?

CAPTAIN GEORGE : Er—yes. . . .

MARGARET : When ?

CAPTAIN GEORGE : Er—yesterday.

[*MARGARET looks at him, and at CLIVE—who catches her eye. WEDDERBURN and CLIVE hurriedly make conversation.*]

MARGARET (*to WEDDERBURN*) : You'll remember that my husband is still an invalid. . . . He mustn't talk too much.

[*WEDDERBURN and CAPTAIN GEORGE both*

protest that they will fall in with her wishes. There is a pause. They obviously wait for her to go. But MARGARET deliberately sits down, and takes up her needlework. CLIVE and WEDDERBURN look at each other.

CLIVE : Meg, my dear—will you see to some refreshment ?

[WEDDERBURN is about to refuse, when he sees CLIVE's motive. But MARGARET deliberately gets up, and rings the bell. CLIVE tries again.]

Meg, my dear, don't leave it to the servants—the wine—my Tokay, needs care—I laid it down myself, they won't know where to find it. . . .

MARGARET : John can find it.

CLIVE : Well, then—I must go myself. *(He makes an effort to go.)*

MARGARET : No, no—I'll go. No, please, Bob, you mustn't go to the cold cellars. . . .

[She moves out.]

[The moment she has gone, CLIVE is obviously impatient to hear WEDDERBURN's news.]

CLIVE : Well—well. . . .

WEDDERBURN : I brought Captain George along. He knows the situation. . . . Here is a written report.

[CLIVE takes it, and folds it up, and conceals it.]
All that we feared—and worse. . . .

CLIVE : In brief—what ?

WEDDERBURN *(slowly)* : India, Bob, is as it was. Plassey might never have been fought. It is as if you had never been to India.

[CLIVE remains stunned for a moment. He looks from WEDDERBURN to CAPTAIN GEORGE, who nods agreement.]

All those you trusted and put in authority have been dismissed.

CLIVE : Dismissed ?

WEDDERBURN : You don't realise, Bob—every director of the East India Company has sons, nephews, relations, friends—and the country is cluttered up with them. They scramble for gold.

[CLIVE *looks round at* CAPTAIN GEORGE.

CAPTAIN GEORGE : Yes, sir—they are all trading in monopolies, not for the Company, but for their own benefit . . . but they sell the same monopoly over and over again, until the natives no longer trust the word of an Englishman.

CLIVE : But Vansittart, the Governor ?

WEDDERBURN : He is too weak to help them. Jaffar has been dethroned—a boy as evil as Suraj ud Dowlah is installed. . . .

CLIVE (*after a pause*) : I was right—I implored His Majesty—I begged Pitt that the Government should take over. It's too big a project for a private company ; we've no right there, Wedderburn, unless we justify ourselves. India should be a sacred trust.

WEDDERBURN : And Pitt said ?

CLIVE (*gloomily*) : England had other fish to fry. (*Thinking*) So now India is as though I'd never been there. I tell you, Wedderburn—hush, not a word of this before Lady Clive.

[MARGARET *comes back with a SERVANT bearing the wine on a tray. The SERVANT retires.*

Thank you, thank you. . . .

[MARGARET *shows no sign of leaving. There is a pause. They obviously want MARGARET to go.* My dear—I feel rested. Perhaps, Wedderburn, you'd like to see round the estate ? . . .

WEDDERBURN (*seeing his motive*) : Charmed.

MARGARET : I'll go with you.

[*This defeats them.*

CLIVE : And yet—after all, as you've so little time, Wedderburn . . .

MARGARET (*coldly*) : Won't he stay ?

WEDDERBURN (*hurriedly*) : No—I thank you—we're on our way to my brother's estate.

[*There is another pause.*]

MARGARET *calmly picks up her work, and reseats herself.*

MRS. CLIFFORD *comes in.*

MRS. CLIFFORD (*to MARGARET*) : My lady, the child is awake. She's fretting for you.

MARGARET : She must wait.

[*There is a loud bump outside, as if a child has fallen. There are several adult voices raised at once, and BETTY is heard saying :*

BETTY : How did she get on the stairs at all ? There, there, then . . . etc.

[*This is too much for MARGARET—she drops her work, and leaves.*]

CLIVE (*when she has gone*) : Quickly now——

WEDDERBURN : The hardest part is to come. These fellows use your name to excuse their depredations.

CLIVE : Mine ? How ?

CAPTAIN GEORGE : You see, sir—they think you obtained great wealth out there—so why not others ?

CLIVE : My God !

CAPTAIN GEORGE : My lord—I don't know the circumstances. They quote you continually.

CLIVE : Is there no difference between a gift from a king, with the full knowledge and approval of the Company, and the wholesale swindling of traders ?

CAPTAIN GEORGE : Yes, yes, my lord—that explains everything.

WEDDERBURN : The Company gave its approval of Jaffar's gift to you ?

CLIVE : Certainly. An official of the Company was present when the gift was made. Captain

George, oblige me by keeping near that door in case anyone comes. . . .

WEDDERBURN : Matters are so bad that the Company is alarmed—the shareholders clamour for the country to be cleared, and for the dismissal of those responsible—with one accord they turn to you.

[CLIVE *swells at the thought. Then he remembers, and picks at MARGARET'S work-box idly. He shakes his head.*

You'll have an absolute free hand—very different to your last situation—sole command—

CLIVE : If I go—and I can't—I'll establish a rule—an absolute veto on private trading—no gifts—nothing. I'll take nothing myself—not even a gift—I'll pay my own costs. . . .

WEDDERBURN : Then ?

CLIVE : I can't go—there are reasons now. . . .

WEDDERBURN : I know. I've come to plead with my Lady Clive.

CLIVE : Don't—don't hint at it. I'll try. My God, I'll try ! But I shall be ashamed to look her in the face. A child died because of India—another child died because we delayed the return home—there is to be another in a few months. Can one ask it of any woman ? And then—(*indicating the room*)—she's like a child herself, with her new home.

[*They look at each other.*

WEDDERBURN : It's for you to say.

[CAPTAIN GEORGE *indicates that someone is coming.*

CLIVE (*hurriedly*) : Temporise. Wedderburn, give me a week, but full powers, mind—full powers—my God, I'd clear that country !

WEDDERBURN : It'd be better to take our leave now. Our presence makes things awkward, for already Lady Clive suspects our mission.

[WEDDERBURN and CAPTAIN GEORGE go out. CLIVE is left alone. He studies the report, muttering to himself. The SURVEYOR appears at the window.

SURVEYOR : My lord . . .

CLIVE (*over his shoulder*) : Eh ? Another time—another time. . . .

SURVEYOR (*perplexed*) : But, my lord, I understood it was urgent.

CLIVE : Urgent ? No. Another time, I tell you.

[MARGARET has come in, and hears this.

MARGARET (*sharply*) : Why ?

CLIVE : Eh ? (*He quickly conceals the paper.*)

MARGARET : Why is anything to do with the estate no longer so urgent ?

CLIVE : Why, one moment you say, “Rest—peace—quiet”—and yet another you plead urgency.

[MARGARET and CLIVE look at each other. She dismisses the SURVEYOR with a nod. He goes. MARGARET has sensed trouble. She knows what is coming, but she staves it off, and plays her last card. In the following scene she does all she can to keep him at home by dwelling on the plans she has made.

MARGARET : Now look at you—is this the man of peace ?—Come. . . .

[*She puts the shawl round him again, but, obviously, it irks him. She draws up the stool again, and attempts to bring him back to earth.*

There're so many things I want to talk to you about. It'll take five years before that avenue of poplars, you've planned, begins to show—five years—Edward will be seventeen—he'll need a firm hand. Fortunately, you'll be here. It's good to plan ahead, don't you think, Bob ? To plan a house—an estate—to see it grow, and to feel that it'll last.

CLIVE : Yes, yes. . . .

MARGARET : Now for my secret. What do you think ? Are you listening.

CLIVE (*comes back with a jerk*) : Yes, yes. . . .

MARGARET : Are you interested in my secret ? This room is all going to be changed—it's going to be *our* room, Bob—nobody else's. Why, I will call it that—the “ Nobody Else's Room ”—are you listening ?

CLIVE : Yes, yes—“ Nobody Else's . . . ”

MARGARET : Do you like the idea ? It'll be shut off with double doors—and here, only two will be allowed to come—you and me. Oh, I love the children, and my friends too, but this is to be a corner withdrawn. Here, you belong to nobody but me—in the Nobody Else's Room.

[*She looks anxiously to see if this has made an impression.*]

CLIVE (*starting*) : Charming—charming. . . .

MARGARET : And I've another surprise. . . . It's going to be refurnished entirely—how do you think ?

CLIVE : New style ? That fellow Chippendale—new-fangled shape—but good.

MARGARET : No. (*She puts down her work.*) I'm going to use all those things from our room in Queen's Square, our first home, Bob. Oh, I know they won't fit—they're awkward and clumsy—for we didn't know good things then—but it was our first home—the home where I first came to know you. . . .

CLIVE : But . . .

MARGARET : I know it's very sentimental, Bob, but you must put up with it. You see, I've wandered so long from place to place. Oh, you've been wonderful—I've had every comfort, but this—this is what I have been longing for. It was your first promise to me—and the only one I have ever held you to—that at last we should find something like this.

CLIVE : Yes. (*He stirs uneasily.*)

[MARGARET is watching him—watching him. Behind her words there is a certain breathlessness from her anxiety to keep him—to say something that will keep him at home. She feels she is losing, and now becomes a little hysterical in her appeal.]

MARGARET : You see, Bob, don't you? You understand? All our old things—your old chair—you'll never get another like it—that ugly old bureau—it'll go over there—the quaint side-piece we meant to get rid of for years—it'll fit there. It'll look just like the old room—even your old stool, I'll re-cover it—it'll all seem to us like that room where we used to plan our final retirement to the country—you remember, Bob, planning it? Then we shall have everything round us—everything, shan't we?

[CLIVE remains inert. He cannot respond. She can bear it no longer, and begins, breathlessly, to accuse.]

You don't answer? You're not pleased? Perhaps you no longer want this home? You've other plans, better ones.

[He looks up and stares at her, and she looks into his eyes.]

Say it—say it. . . . I know, it must come . . . India, India. . . .

CLIVE : I've said nothing. . . .

MARGARET (*still reading him*) : And do we need to say these things—you and I? Can't I read you like a book? Don't I know that I was a fool to expect your promise to be kept? You've been planning, scheming, to go back—it's India—India again. . . .

CLIVE (*his words tumbling over themselves*) : Margaret—the country is in ruins . . . the natives are in arms.

MARGARET : What's that to do with me?

CLIVE : I beg you to listen—my life's work is gone. . . .

MARGARET : You shan't go. I've given my life for India. It has taken two of my children—they're dead—dead—for what ?

CLIVE : Meg, you mustn't excite yourself like this—remember your state.

MARGARET : What does that matter ? What are children to you ?

CLIVE : Margaret !

MARGARET : And I—what do I matter ? You talk of love—but a breath of the word India, and away it goes. . . .

CLIVE : I have a duty—

MARGARET : Duty ? To enrich the East India Company—to make more millions for them—and what can they do for you ?—more riches—an English peerage instead of an Irish. And, when all's said and done, you'll still have to live—and for what ?

CLIVE : Meg, I must keep faith—

MARGARET : You'll keep faith with them well enough—but with me—oh, no. Like a gambler, you'll pay anything but your honest debts.

CLIVE : I'll call Mrs. Clifford—at this time you must not—

MARGARET : Yes, yes, yes—call them to take an hysterical woman out of your way—out of sight, out of mind.

CLIVE : Come . . .

MARGARET : I have a right, I tell you—a right . . .

[She suddenly stops her hysteria, and there is a stillness. She stands looking straight ahead.]

You'll go. . . .

[CLIVE makes a movement to go to her.]

But this time you go alone.

CLIVE : Alone ?

MARGARET : Yes, alone. You'll go without a

prayer from any of us, and without a loving thought. . . . Your child will be born here—you go, and you go alone.

[CLIVE *makes an appeal. She takes no notice.*
Whatever success you may have will end in disaster.

CLIVE (*smiling*) : Margaret, my dear, how can success be disaster ?

MARGARET : It will come.

[*He picks up her hand, and kisses it, hoping the moment has come to make peace.*

You kissed my hand like that before—at our first meeting, and you said—oh, I remember it —“ May the end, when it comes, be like this.”
This is the end.

[*He drops her hand. She moves to the door, and goes out. CLIVE is left alone. He looks at the official report in his hand.*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A corridor in the House of Commons, nine years later.
CLIVE has returned from India. He has swept away the abuses that were ruining the country, established law and order. But all those he dismissed for wholesale robbery have got back before him and began a campaign against him. His enemies are now packing the House of Commons to pass a vote of censure on my Lord Clive of Plassey.

During the short interval after the Walcot scene the murmurs begin, and grow in volume until the curtain rises.

There is confusion, noise on the stage, and distant murmurs of the angry House of Commons swell the noise. The scene resembles that of the hustings rather than the House of Commons. All the members are at the highest pitch of excitement. The attendants try to keep back the crowd at the doorway.

In the foreground a big member is simply pounding on a friend's shoulder and shouting with great joy :

1ST MEMBER : Fox tore him to ribbons !

2ND MEMBER : We've got him down at last.

1ST MEMBER (*roaring*) : Hey ? This time my Lord Clive returns from India with no fatted calf ready for him, eh ?

[A 3RD MEMBER runs up, grips his arm, and shouts :

3RD MEMBER : We'll get the vote of censure ?

1ST MEMBER : We've packed the House—it's certain, certain.

[Noise, murmurs, grow as doors open. Several come through and pass quickly across. The group splits up.

A 4TH MEMBER at the same time runs in, grips the 1ST MEMBER, and shouts :

4TH MEMBER : I've routed out a few more.

1ST MEMBER : Good—good. (*He catches a passer-by.*) Hear that ? Yes, we've dragged the sick and dying from their beds.

5TH MEMBER : So long as they vote !

[The noise grows again.

1ST MEMBER (*shouting*) : Get them all into the House—

OTHERS :	{	Search the ante-rooms . . .
		Fetch them all in . . .
		Pack the House . . .
		Don't leave it to chance . . .
		Take the vote now . . .
		Keep the Government out of India . . .
	{	Leave it to the Company . . .

[A concerted movement leaves an irascible OLD MAN dancing with exasperation.

OLD MAN : Sir—has the House gone mad ?

1ST MEMBER : No. Sane at last.

[Laughter from the others.

OLD MAN : I can't get sense out of anybody—
I don't even know which way to vote.

1ST MEMBER : Do you want your dividends
reduced ?

OLD MAN (*screaming*) : Good God, no !

1ST MEMBER : Then support the vote of censure
on my Lord Clive.

[*At the back, WEDDERBURN pushes through the crowd, who make way but look round and murmur at him. He is just in time to hear the last two lines, and now comes quickly to the OLD MAN and speaks urgently to him, but at the others of the group.*

WEDDERBURN (*vehemently*) : Sir, it's not true. My Lord Clive has been to India for five years, at the risk of his health and at his own expense—he has cleared the country and given the East India Company three new provinces and revenue they never dreamed of.

[*There are murmurs and snorts of contempt.*

OLD MAN : Then—then why all this ?

WEDDERBURN : Because, sir, all those he found robbing the country he dismissed. (*The snorts of contempt continue.*) They were able to return home first and create this monstrous campaign of lies against him.

OTHERS : { The man's mad . . .
Don't believe it . . .
Ruin the Company . . .

OLD MAN : What *am* I to believe ?

WEDDERBURN : Now they are censuring him for accepting Mir Jaffar's gift after Plassey, sixteen years ago, and are trying to strip him of his honour and leave him penniless. It's infamous.

1ST MEMBER (*to the OLD MAN*) : Don't believe a word of it.

WEDDERBURN : Sir, I beg you to listen—ask my Lord Chatham.

[*THE OTHERS take the OLD MAN away, saying :
"No use talking to Chatham—come with us," etc.*

A crescendo. CHATHAM comes through the crowd with MASKELYNE.

CHATHAM comes to WEDDERBURN. Though an old man, CHATHAM is also under the influence of the prevailing excitement.

CHATHAM (*vehemently*) : I knew it ! It will come to impeachment in the end.

MASKELYNE : It's terrible. (*Using MARGARET's words of the previous scene.*) Who could foresee that his success could end in disaster ?

CHATHAM : I told him—I told him what would happen if he advised His Majesty that the Government should take over India. I told him the East India Company would pack the House against him. Now—look at the pack.

[OLD HARDCASTLE comes through quickly, shouting :

HARDCASTLE : I may be old—I may be feeble—but I'll vote. A monster, sir, a monster !

[*Crescendo of noise again. Crowd opens out. Silence. CLIVE comes through. The murmurs begin again. HARDCASTLE meets him.*

You're a scoundrel, sir, and if I were a younger man, I'd call you out.

CLIVE (*firmly*) : If you were a younger man, sir, you wouldn't dare.

[*Murmurs—"Get them into the House—leave him with his cronies—come on—he won't escape—vote of censure, impeachment," etc.*

They go through the doors. There is comparative silence. Two attendants, now the rush is over, take their places calmly, and remain stationary during the next scene.

WEDDERBURN (*taking CLIVE by the arm*) : Take no notice, Bob. Your speech was magnificent. It told.

[CLIVE shakes his head. He is obviously exhausted. He puts his hand on MASKELYNE's shoulder and gasps out :

CLIVE : I must go home, Edmund.

MASKELYNE : Won't you let me send for Margaret ?

CLIVE : Margaret ? (*Quietly*) No, thank you ; she prefers to be at Walcot.

MASKELYNE : But, Bob—I know things have never been the same since you left for India. But she'll come if you ask.

CLIVE (*huskily*) : She's better at Walcot. There's no need to send for her now, in the midst of my humiliation.

MASKELYNE : Bob, can't you tell me what it is ?

CLIVE : No man can serve two masters, especially when one is a woman. Why had I to wait for this ? A dozen times, Edmund—a bullet, a knife—an inch or so one way or the other, and Robert Clive would have been buried with honour. It's a great mistake for a soldier to live too long.

MASKELYNE : You're going home to Berkeley Square.

[CLIVE *nods*.

You won't wait for the result of the vote in the House ?

CLIVE : I can't ; my head is bursting. I can't give way here. I must go home—home.

WEDDERBURN (*kindly*) : Bob, you can't stay in that huge house at Berkeley Square by yourself. Go to my house. My wife will sit up with you, and I'll bring you the news. It's not a time for anyone to be alone.

CLIVE : I thank you. But I am alone. That is ungrateful—I've two friends. One of you will bring me the news of how the vote has gone ?

[*They nod. CLIVE suddenly thinks of something.*
I shall be at Queen's Square.

MASKELYNE : Your old house ?

CLIVE : Yes. I've a fancy for it. Good night.

[He braces himself up and walks away.]

WEDDERBURN (to MASKELYNE): He'll break down—he's had these hysterical fits lately. I've seen him weeping like a child.

MASKELYNE: He misses Margaret terribly.

[WEDDERBURN nods.]

I didn't think there was so much bitterness in her.

WEDDERBURN: Does she believe these stories they spread about him?

MASKELYNE: No—it's not that . . .

WEDDERBURN: Then what is it?

MASKELYNE: Who can tell? One can't ask. One can't pry into the lives of people who have been so much to each other. It's heart-breaking when you think of his great days.

[There is a sudden entrance of several people talking loudly, and one is heard to say: "Vansittart has thrown him over—a most bitter speech. Why don't they take the vote now?" "We have him."]

They go off, and MASKELYNE and WEDDERBURN move to follow them.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The house at Queen's Square, the same night.

The room as in Act II., Scene I.

The BUTLER is taking off covers from the furniture frantically, and an austere HOUSEKEEPER is trying to make the fire blaze. Both of them are in a state of agitation, and the following dialogue is spoken in a hurried undertone as they go about their jobs quickly:

BUTLER: Is the fire alight in the bedroom?

HOUSEKEEPER: Yes—I lit that first.

BUTLER : The warming-pan—is it in ?

HOUSEKEEPER : Yes. Does he still have his gruel ?

BUTLER : God knows. And the brandy is low. . . .

HOUSEKEEPER : I *told* you

BUTLER : Quiet.

HOUSEKEEPER : He might have given us more notice.

BUTLER : Notice ? His orders have always been that the place must be ready——

HOUSEKEEPER : He hasn't been here for years.

BUTLER : It is not our place to question.

HOUSEKEEPER : Aren't there enough rooms in his huge house in Berkeley Square that he must come here—and without warning ?

BUTLER : Just a fancy, I suppose.

[*There is a ring at the bell, peremptory, furious. The BUTLER runs off.*

The HOUSEKEEPER redoubles her efforts to get things straight—folds up dust sheets, sweeps the hearth, puts chairs quite right.

CLIVE totters in with the help of the BUTLER. They stand and wait helplessly. CLIVE says nothing, but looks round the room, and we understand he is noting the items we have established before as belonging to his early associations with MARGARET.

He turns and looks at the picture of LADY CLIVE by Gainsborough. At last he becomes aware of the others.

CLIVE : I'll sit here.

BUTLER : Shall I bring the chair near the fire, sir ?

CLIVE : Leave it. A shawl.

BUTLER : Shawl ?

[*They look at each other.*

Shall I get you a rug ?

CLIVE : Anything.

BUTLER : Something hot for you, my lord ?

CLIVE : Yes—no—what you will. (*He looks round.*) That work-box—it should be there.

[*They move it hurriedly.*]

The stool has been moved.

BUTLER : Yes, my lord, to sweep.

CLIVE : Move it back. It should be here.

BUTLER : Yes, sir. Your bedroom is prepared.

CLIVE : I shan't need it.

BUTLER : Not need it ?

CLIVE : I remain in here.

BUTLER : All night, my lord ?

CLIVE : I expect a messenger from the House of Commons. When he comes, admit him at once—at once—no delay. You'll keep near the door—all night ; don't lose a moment.

BUTLER : I'm to wake you, sir ?

CLIVE : There'll be no need to wake me.

[*The BUTLER goes out.*]

CLIVE is alone. He sits in his chair—clumsily pulls the rug round him. It will not go round his shoulders properly, as we saw the shawl used to go. He looks down at MARGARET's place beside him—he almost makes a gesture with which we are now familiar. He tries to open a bottle on the side-table, but the opening is too stiff—he wishes to ring—it is too much trouble to move—and he feels, "What's the use ?" He sits looking round the room, thinking. There is a faint ring. He looks up. Presently the BUTLER comes in, saying :

BUTLER : My lord—it is my Lady Clive.

CLIVE (*mastering his surprise*) : What ? Of course, of course. Tell her I'm in here.

[*The BUTLER goes off.*]

CLIVE braces himself to make a show. He throws

away the rug and stands before the fire in an attitude of the master of his own house.

MARGARET comes in. *She is uncertain for a moment, seeing him like this—then comes slowly to him, until she is quite close.*

Under stress of his emotion, he speaks almost brusquely, and with forced cheerfulness.

CLIVE : Margaret ? What's happened ? Nothing wrong at Walcot ? The children not ill ? Come, come—speak—some difficulty perhaps ?

[They look at each other for a long time until CLIVE's shoulders begin to round with the strain.

She puts out her hand. He takes it, bends over it—and falls at her feet.

Margaret—I'm in agony—we're lost—they'll strip us of everything—they cry after me in the street. You were right ! Oh, God ! you were right !

[Slowly he recovers, and mutters :

Take no notice, I have these fits—the weakness of a moment——

[She assists him to his chair. He sinks into it. She puts her hands on his forehead. He is quieter, but his whole body is shaking.

She wraps him in the rug as we have seen before at Walcot.

They are now no longer my lord and lady, but just two people who have come together after a long-standing quarrel.

CLIVE : You know my need.

MARGARET : I always know.

CLIVE *(after a pause)* : The children feel it ?

MARGARET *(quietly)* : They don't go out much. People are so cruel.

[She sits quietly beside him, as we have seen her sit before.

CLIVE : It's this waiting—waiting. (*Suddenly he turns to her.*) Yet you have waited before like this—yes, many times—you must have waited—for news.

[MARGARET *nods. She is thinking of those times.*

MARGARET : Yes. Plassey was the worst.

CLIVE : How did the news come ?

MARGARET : For three days I waited. A native came first. He said simply : “ Clive Sahib is master of all.”

CLIVE : And you ?

MARGARET : I just went on preparing the child's food, and it wasn't till some minutes later that I realised what it meant ; then a great peace came upon me—a peace that settles on you, and you hear yourself repeating : “ It's all right, it's all right,” over and over again.

CLIVE : A long road, Meg, we've travelled together. And all this came out of a little locket—a letter from a poor clerk at five pounds a year. What made you come out to a total stranger without hope or prospects ? I wrote you that.

MARGARET : Why, it was just that—your need of me was so great. It was a terrible letter, Bob—it cried out.

CLIVE : The impudence of it ! What courage one has—in youth. Our first meeting, you remember ? Did you imagine me anything like that ?

MARGARET : I was too alarmed at seeing you at all. . . . You were so hot and dusty.

CLIVE : My hands were dirty—I remember. How uncouth I must have seemed—yet you kissed me. That was courage.

MARGARET : Of youth.

CLIVE : Twenty years ago. A rough road, Meg—and now we wait here—for what may be the end.

MARGARET : No. We'll go back to Walcot.

CLIVE : We shan't have it.

MARGARET : Then we'll have this—(*indicating the room*)—or will that go too ?

CLIVE : They'll take our lands—wealth—my honour—everything.

MARGARET : Then we've only—this. (*She puts her hand on his.*)

[CLIVE *nods*.

CLIVE : And is this—all that I promised you ?

MARGARET : All.

CLIVE (*repeating to himself*) : All.

[*He turns to her. She is crying quietly.*

MARGARET : Nothing else matters ?

CLIVE : Nothing. (*Suddenly he hears a noise in the street.*) What's that ? (*Immediately he is back to earth again.*) It might be the news. No—it's gone by—

[MARGARET *smiles. Nothing else mattered, but at the first sign of the news he has forgotten her.*

Why do you smile like that ?

MARGARET : You are such a man.

CLIVE : Why—how—— ?

MARGARET : You can't help it, dear. We'll wait.

[*She makes him comfortable so that he can doze. There is a pause. Suddenly he sits up. There is a ring at the bell downstairs. The tension immediately begins to grow.*

The BUTLER enters.

BUTLER : Lord Chatham is below, sir.

CLIVE (*surprised*) : Chatham ! Ask him up at once.

[BUTLER goes out.

CLIVE looks at MARGARET.

Chatham? Matters go badly when he's afoot at this hour.

MARGARET: Will it mean so much to you?

CLIVE: I can't lie, Meg.

[CHATHAM comes in.

CHATHAM: My Lady Clive. (*He bows to her.*)

MARGARET: My husband asks you to forgive him rising——

CHATHAM: Please. The House did not rise until six, and His Majesty requested Lord North to go to him. I took the liberty of following him unasked. His Majesty was gracious enough to see me as well. I begged Wedderburn to let me bring you the news myself . . .

[CLIVE nods. *They wait for the result, but CHATHAM continues keeping them in suspense.*

. . . Towards the end of the session the debate was, perhaps, the most acrimonious I have ever heard. At least a dozen duels are promised.

[CLIVE tries to speak and ask the question.

As I was afraid, Fox and Burgoyne carried the House.

[CLIVE grips his chair.

But your supporters made up for their lack of numbers by the fury of their invective.

[MARGARET sees that CLIVE can bear it no longer.

MARGARET: Will your lordship kindly—tell us?

CHATHAM: You won't require the actual wording, but in general I regret to say that the House condemned the conduct of my Lord Clive of Plassey in respect of the accusation brought forward . . .

[CLIVE's hands drop.

But *grudgingly* they conceded that " Lord Clive had at the same time rendered great services to his country."

MARGARET : Meaning ?

CHATHAM : I think your fortune is safe, my lord.

CLIVE : And my honour ?

CHATHAM : You must consider it intact.

[He offers his hand, and CLIVE takes it quietly.]

One good thing may arise. Your long-wished-for dream may come true. Your recent revelations may force His Majesty's Government to step in and govern India. If we accept the responsibility of India, we must give it colour by governing. So far it is merely a dream, but it is coming.

[CLIVE nods his appreciation.]

(More kindly) His Majesty, in private, asked me to convey a message to you.

CLIVE : His Majesty ?

CHATHAM : King George desires me to say that he remembers with gratitude that you have added a great new Dominion to the Empire.

[He stands holding CLIVE's hand. CLIVE is too overcome to look up. It is more than he expected. His body rocks silently and his head nods slowly his appreciation.]

CHATHAM moves out.

The door clicks. MARGARET makes a movement to bring the rug over his shoulders, but CLIVE remains, as before, overwhelmed.

CURTAIN

